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OR,
FIVE POINTS PHIL AND
THE BIRDS OF PREY.

BY JO PIERCE,
(Of the New York Detective Force,
AUTHOR OF "BOB O' THE BOWERY," "FIVE
POINTS PHIL," "JACK JAGGERS,"
"GAMIN BOB," ETC.

CHAPTER I.
THE ROBBERY.
"That man was no policeman!"
"He said that he was."
"No doubt."
"Who was he, then, Rex?"
"A thief, and the meanest kind of a thief. A
man who would rob the dead is too mean to
breathe the same air that honest folks use. He

"WRESTLIN' REX AIN'T GOIN' TER DRINK NO DRUGGED MIXTURE WHILE I'M AROUND!" AND
FIVE POINTS PHIL ASSUMED A MENACING ATTITUDE WHICH MEANT BUSINESS.

knew that your mother was dead, and he came here to rob her of— Well, I don't exactly know what, for she didn't have many valuables. Wait a bit! Did your mother have anything that she guarded closely—papers, or anything of that kind?"

"I don't know."

"Did the man take anything away?"

"I didn't notice; I was only thinking of poor mamma. Perhaps Maggie knows."

"I'll see Maggie."

The speaker stood upon the upper floor of a miserable tenement-house on Baxter street, New York.

They were a boy and a girl, the former being a stoutly-built young fellow of about sixteen, while the girl was not over eleven. Upon them, and all through the house, the hand of Poverty had been heavily laid, yet they were noticeable for two things. They lived where their immediate neighbors were in many cases ignorant, lazy, unclean and dishonest, yet these two could be called none of these.

It is true that both were very plainly dressed, and the girl, in particular, would have been very ragged had not careful hands faithfully patched her coarse garments. She was scrupulously neat, and her face was an intelligent, inviting one, despite the fact that it was now stained with tears.

The youth was dressed in clothes that had not yet required patches, but they were very plain and coarse, and he, like the girl, seemed to be the heir of Poverty. He was chiefly noticeable for a gravity of expression and manner unusual to one of his years, but his face was good and honest, as well as frank and bold.

His name was Rex Peters, while that of the girl was Ella Austin.

They had for some time been inmates of the tenement-house. Rex, who was an orphan, had a room in the quarters of a man named Toffling, but more commonly known as Umbrella Eph, a *sobriquet* given him because of his business.

Ella had lived with her mother, but Mrs. Austin was now dead, and the little girl was alone in the world. It was the peculiar circumstances which had followed her death that led to the conversation before recorded.

Just as Rex had expressed a desire to see "Maggie," a stout, middle-aged woman entered the room. She was an honest-looking person, but she also looked very ignorant and stupid.

"Maggie," said Rex, quickly, "what has happened here?"

The woman glanced at Ella and held up one hand.

"Hush—'sh!" she answered.

"I don't mean about Mrs. Austin, for Ella and I have been talking about that. What about the man who has been here?"

"He was a policeman."

"Did you know him?"

"Oi did not."

"Then how do you know that he was a policeman?"

"He said dat he was."

"Did he have on any part of his uniform?"

"Oi didn't notice."

"Did you see his badge?"

"Oi did not."

Maggie answered very promptly, and seemed to feel wholly at ease on the point. She had a headlong way of talking and acting which indicated unbounded confidence in herself and her abilities, but it remained a fact that she made some deplorable mistakes.

"Then," said Rex, somewhat sharply, "why did you let the man enter Mrs. Austin's room, and do as he saw fit?—in any case, why did you let him do it? Even if he was a policeman, and you had known it, what right had he in there?"

The woman's eyes opened very widely.

"Why, a policeman has a right ter go in whar."

"How do you make that out?"

"Sure, an' didn't the coppers overrun de rooms of de Maginneses, whin ould Pat killed his wife whin he was droonk?"

"That was a very different matter. Mrs. Maginnis was murdered, and the law and its officers, of course, took charge. This case is not in the least like it. Mrs. Austin died a natural death, and a policeman had no more business to come prowling around than I should have in Jay Gould's house."

"Probably the p'lice knew de girrul was alone."

Maggie nodded toward Ella, in her usual confident way. Rex was deeply annoyed by her stupidity.

"Well, did the man take anything away with him?"

"How do Oi know?"

"How do you know?" repeated Rex, sharply, and severe words trembled upon his lips; but he put them aside and mildly added: "Of course we want to know what has been done, Maggie."

"Certain. Well, Oi *did* see him putt a paper in his pocket."

"What kind of a paper?"

"Oh! white paper—wid writing on it, Oi dare say."

"Where did he get it?"

"Out ave the troonk."

"He took a paper from the trunk, put it in his pocket and carried it away, did he?"

Rex was becoming worried.

"Didn't Oi say so?"

"You certainly did, and now I would like to know why you let him take it."

Because he was a policeman.

Rex made a gesture of disgust.

"See here, you," added Maggie, "who set you up fur a talker? Phat call hev yez to till me my business, I'd loike ter know. It's twice yer years, Oi am; an' you can't tell me phat to do, an' phat not to do."

"Never mind; I know you wouldn't willingly do any harm, but I don't like the idea of this man fumbling about the rooms. Did he say what he was going to do with the paper?"

"No."

"Would you know him if you saw him again?"

"Oi'm not sure, either way."

"I'm sorry of that."

"Phat are yez makin' all dis fuss about, anyhow?" demanded Maggie, curtly. "Phat if he has taken a few ould papers?"

"I'll tell you just what, Maggie," Rex seriously replied. "Mrs. Austin has lived in this house eight years, ever since Ella was two or three years old, but she has died and left Ella alone. She has left only a few dollars—not enough to last a week—and Ella has no one to whom she can go. She is poor and friendless. If she has a relative in the world she does not know it, for her mother never told her anything about her past life. Now those papers which the man took—very likely there was more than one paper—may have told the whole story, and given information which would enable Ella to find friends. If they are lost she has absolutely no way to turn, and no one to go to; she is thrown upon the world at an age when she can't help herself."

The last sentence was spoken in a lower voice, for he did not want to add to the sorrows of the bereaved girl.

Maggie's confident manner had vanished.

"Oi'm sorry ef Oi've done wrong," she humbly replied, "but Oi thought it was a copper, sure. Now see here, Rex, you look inter dis before it's too late."

"I'm going to see if the police have done anything."

The lad's voice showed that he considered such an investigation quite hopeless.

"Dat's roight," Maggie replied; "you go right off. Dey will pay attintion to yez, ef ye once mention dat you are Wrestling Rex."

Rex did not answer; he scarcely heard what the woman said. He turned and spoke a few words to Ella, and then left the house.

He felt a good deal troubled by what he had said. It was wholly a surmise on his part that the papers taken away by the unknown man were of importance, but he possessed an unusually strong mind for one of his years, and he had a theory that there was more in this matter than appeared on the surface.

He had known the late Mrs. Austin well. She had been a pale, and silent woman, and he had often thought in the past that there might be a romance in her life-history of which the world knew nothing. Once he had casually asked some questions about her past, and she had looked at him in a quick, strange way, and avoided an answer. She had been uncommunicative to all, but her gentle, patient life had won the hearts of all who knew her.

Now she was gone with life, and if she had had a secret it had not been told. She had died suddenly of heart disease. Only for that it was not likely she would have left Ella so utterly unprotected, but she had died without warning.

Unless her relatives could be traced, Ella must go to a charitable institution or be adopted by those as poor as herself, out of pity, and New York is no place for a motherless girl, especially not the Sixth Ward.

Rex was gone nearly an hour. Maggie was anxiously awaiting his return.

"Well, phat news?" she asked.

"As I feared. No agent of the police has

been here, nor have they ever heard of Mrs. Austin."

"Begorra, dat's bad!"

"It is bad, Maggie."

"Does yez think dat paper was of vally?"

"I think it was valuable. I may be wholly out of the way, but the idea is strong in my mind that it contained information which would have enabled Ella to find her mother's relatives. If there was such a paper, it has been stolen by one who, for unknown reasons, was Ella's enemy."

CHAPTER II.

THE YOUNG DETECTIVE.

THE more Rex looked into the matter, the more it appeared suspicious to him. It was soon an established fact that the unknown man had not only lied, but had used great secrecy about his movements. No one had seen him enter the house; no one had seen him go away.

He had simply appeared at the Austins' room, stated that he was a police officer, and, deceiving Maggie, had then fumbled about the trunk all that he cared to. Of course, Ella was too young to realize the actual nature of the case, and Maggie had been too stupid to see that the police would have nothing to do with the trunk of a woman who, as stated by a physician, had died of heart disease.

Rex questioned everybody he could find. It was not that he wanted to put himself forward, but though the people of the house were kindly disposed toward the orphan girl, they had less leisure than he.

Rex enjoyed something of a reputation in the Sixth Ward as a wrestler. He was learning a trade with a photographer, but the old gentleman was not a patient man, and did not care to have him around all the time when he was at work, so Rex, as before said, had some leisure time.

After asking many questions about the unknown robber, and doing considerable thinking, he left the house and made his way to Houston street. Ringing the bell of a certain house there, he asked the servant who appeared if "Phil" was in, and on being answered in the affirmative, he entered, and was soon in the presence of that person.

The latter, who was a boy of about his own age, was reading a book, and he gave it a flourish as Rex appeared.

"Afternoon, my b'loved corntemporary, afternoon! Hope I see yer wal, arnd enjoyin' sech blessin's as Providence has bestowed upon ye. Shows a level head fur a critter ter dooly 'preciate the good gifts o' life, though I can't blame a man fur bein' woebegone over pestiferous troubles."

"There are a good many troubles, Phil."

The former speaker's face had been careless and jolly, but it suddenly grew grave.

"Be you in trouble, Rex?"

"No."

"What's up, then?"

"Somebody else is in trouble, and I've come to you for help."

"Wharfore ter me, my good marn?"

"I suspect that it may need a little detective work, and you are just the person for it. You have made the name of Five Points Phil about as famous as though you were a regular detective, and I know you work cheaper."

"All I tax is my car-fare," replied Phil, a humorous gleam in his eyes. "The Inter-State Commerce law don't interfere with folks passin' over nickels ter me ter be joodiciously used on hoss-cars. Assooredly not! But I am joob'us erbot this. School will soon open in this hyar year o' grace, 1887, arnd I am readin'-up. Arter it begins, no more 'round-town life fur Five Points Phil."

"But you'll help me in this case?"

Phil glanced at the book which he had laid down.

"I hadn't orter," he replied, "but I feel the detective fever in my veins, bad. What's the case?"

Rex gave a full account of the supposed robbery.

"A small girl left alone in pestiferous poverty!" muttered Phil. "Bad, I do declare. Poverty is a mean thing ter hev around, my b'loved corntemporary. When a marn sleeps with it, walks with it, shares his clo'se with it, arnd a'most starves with it, it's a mean companion—Poverty is. A small girl left desolate! Rex, I reckon I'll walk over with ye."

They returned to the tenement-house. The scene had not changed. Ella was still in sorrow and no one had appeared to state that the missing papers were in his hands for safe-keeping.

Plainly, no one had taken them with any good motive.

Five Points Phil, after a few moments' investigation, seemed to be impressed by a certain fact, and he finally took Rex aside.

"You say nobody seen that pestiferous robber enter the house?"

"No one did."

"Nor go out?"

"Nor go out."

"That strikes me ez odd—cornsid'rin' how this 'ere house is put up arnd inhabited, it strikes me ez bein' decidedly odd, by ginger!"

"I thought of that."

"Rex, is thar a way ter git onter the roof o' this hyar royal palace?"

"Yes."

"Kin we go up?"

"Of course. We are on the top floor now, and Mr. Toffling—Umbrella Eph, they call him—has the rooms near the scuttle. I have a room with Toffling, so I am at liberty to lead you to the roof. Come on!"

He led the way, and they were soon upon the house-top. The building was high, and there was rather an interesting view from the roof, but Five Points Phil did not look about to see the thousands of other buildings grouped around it.

He had one idea in his mind, and he proceeded to follow it up.

On one side the adjoining building was much lower, and it interested him but little, but on the other was a tenement-house which reared its head exactly to the level of that they stood upon.

Phil noticed, too, that there was a scuttle in the roof.

"Who lives next door?" he asked.

"Great Scott! don't ask me! It's full of folks, like this house."

"Honest?"

Rex shrugged his shoulders.

"We get a little of everything around here; for variety, give me the Sixth Ward. We have everything except the aristocracy here. Honest? Well, some of them are, and some are not."

"That's a peccoliarly explicit arnswer, by ginger; it'll apply ter nigh about ev'ry house o' size in this ward. But see hyar, Rex, d'ye know anybody in that p'latial edifice?"

"Oh! yes. There's Sam Connor, who lives on the top floor; and Pete—"

"Who's Sam Connor? How old, *et scattery*, ter use the pure, unadulterated Italian lingo?"

"Phil, you're a caution!" declared Rex. "Will you never give up your old, queer ways of speech? With your education there is no reason why you shouldn't talk like other folks."

"My b'loved contemporary," Phil gravely replied, "don't hurry the torchlight procession. Ontil school begins I'm a Five Points product; arter that, I'll talk only Greek, arnd 'sociate only with the perfessors o' Columby arnd Yale Colleges. Assooredly! But erbout Sam Connor?"

"He's a friend of mine, about twenty-five years old. He lost his place last week because of a fire, and is now doing nothing."

"Let's go arnd see him."

They went. When they neared the top floor of the other house they heard some one talking in a loud, excited voice, and when they reached the upper hall Rex saw his friend, Connor, and the landlady. His first idea was that Connor had in some way incurred that lady's wrath, for she certainly *was* very angry; but a few words enlightened him.

"I leave it to you, Mr. Connor," averred Mrs. Sparks, flourishing both hands, "if there is a meaner thing in the world than to beat a poor woman out of her due, and rents away up in the air. You wouldn't do it, Mr. Connor!"

"But Pfeffer may come back, Mrs. Sparks."

"Pfeffer will *not* come back, Mr. Connor. He has skipped, and he owes me five dollars for rent, and all I have to show for it is that dilapidated old trunk, filled with bricks!"

"It's hard, Mrs. Sparks."

"It's awful hard."

Five Points Phil had whispered to Rex, and the latter now advanced.

"Excuse me, Mrs. Sparks," he said, "but I have by accident heard a part of what you have said. I am sorry you are in trouble."

"It's a mean man who will run away and cheat a poor woman out of her rent!" declared the landlady, shaking her fist at the imaginary man.

"Who was this Pfeffer?"

"Who was he? A murderer, I do believe!"

"A murderer! Has any one been killed?"

"We've found no one, but it wasn't his fault."

Rather than pay me my rent he would have killed me—yes, sir; he would have slain me in cold blood. That man was a villain!"

Mrs. Sparks sawed the air still more with her arms, but Rex managed to calm her sufficiently to get her story. It might have been made a brief one, but she was not miserly in the use of words; she made it a long story.

A man giving the name of Pfeffer had hired a room of her four weeks before. He had paid one week in advance, and she believed that he would be a good lodger, but that payment was the last. During the three weeks which followed he paid nothing, avoiding it by means of plausible excuses, and she allowed herself to be satisfied that all would be well because he had a heavy trunk.

Finally she grew impatient, and he promised the money at a stated time, without fail. That was on this day, and she had come to the room to see him.

He was not in the room, but there was a note upon the table which told her to look in the trunk for her pay. She looked, and found it filled with paper and bricks.

She had been badly "sold."

"This comes of trusting perfidious man!" she tragically said, in conclusion. "No good ever comes of such a thing, and I ought to have known it. This man, Pfeffer, was the worst of the lot. Mr. Connor, there was something mysterious about that man!"

CHAPTER III.

A MYSTERIOUS LODGER.

THE last words did not escape Five Points Phil's attentive ears, and he moved forward a step.

"Mrs. Sparks, mum, you hev my fullest sympathy in this 'ere case, fur it is plain that you hev be'n wronged by a pestiferous villain. Now, I'm sorter in with the p'lice, arnd I may be able ter help ye. Assooredly! Allow me ter arsk wharfore Pfeffer was myster'us."

"I believe he was a thief."

"Thart a fact?"

"Yes."

"Hev you lost money or jewels?"

Phil put the last question with some hesitation, for it was not at all likely that Mrs. Sparks had any jewels, and she might think him impudent, but she saw fit to be pleased and looked that way.

"No, but I know he would have taken them if he could."

Mrs. Sparks looked as determined as though she had irrevocably proven the man a thief.

"I'll tell you all about him," said she, as she sat down on the ladder that led to the scuttle. When he came here he was mighty polite and nice.

"Have you rooms to let?" says he.

"I have that," says I.

"I want one," says he.

"Happy to accommodate," says I, and I led the way to the second story front.

"Don't like this," says he: "not that I object to the room, for it is a dandy—he actually said that—but I have a theory that no one can be healthy in the city unless he is well up where the air is pure. I want a room on your top floor, marm."

"I was surprised, for he was quite well dressed, but I didn't say a word; I led the way up. I had one vacant room on this floor; that one there."

"Not the one he finally took," remarked observant Five Points Phil.

"No, and there comes in something queer. He looked at the room, I told him the price, and he said that it was all right; adding that money was no object, but he didn't justly seemed satisfied. He wandered out into the hall."

"I'd like that room," says he, pointing.

"It's not a nice room," says I.

"It's a rear room, which I like," says he.

"But it's occupied," says I.

"Perhaps the other party will change," says he.

"I don't think so," says I, "for the rent of the front room would be beyond his means."

"Just then in comes the other party—Mr. Schiebeck—and we had a talk. Mr. Schiebeck would be glad to oblige, but he really could not pay the rent of the front room."

"See here," says that miserable Pfeffer, "if you will change I'll pay the rent charged for the front room, and you pay just what you've been paying."

"Mr. Connor, when he said that I opened my eyes that wide that you wouldn't have known me," the landlady declared. "Blessed few men

would from choice pay the rent of a nice room and take a poor one; while it is a fact that the back room is *very* bad."

She arose and opened the door as she spoke, and Five Points Phil eagerly improved the chance to see the room. It was small for a "square" room; the ceiling was very low, and the single window looked about as much like the entrance to a bird-house as it did like what it purported to be. More than this, the room was very poorly furnished, indeed.

"This is the room he took in preference to my front room, willingly paying double what I asked for this one."

So saying, Mrs. Sparks crossed the hall and showed them the other room. This, too, had a low ceiling, but it was a neat, bright, pleasant room—a strong contrast to the other.

Rex and Connor expressed their surprise at hearing of Mr. Pfeffer's choice, but Phil said nothing. He had noted one peculiar fact; the room which Pfeffer had been so anxious to get was next to that of the Austins in the next house.

This, taken in connection with other things, seemed significant to him.

"So Pfeffer got the room, did he?" Phil at last asked, as Mrs. Sparks began to wander in her remarks.

"He did that. Of course Schiebeck was glad to change, and the result was that Pfeffer came here. I wish the Old Nick had had him before he came—the Lord forgive me, if I am wicked!"

"He was a quiet lodger," ventured Connor.

"Too quiet and modest to pay his rent," sarcastically observed Mrs. Sparks.

Phil had been looking elsewhere for a few moments, and he now asked:

"Where does the sound o' them voices come from?"

"From the next house, likely."

"What! kin you hear through?"

"Yes. This house an' the next is all one, really; there is no brick wall between. I could always hear from one to another plain, and since the plastering came off there it is more so."

"When did that 'ere plast'rin' come off?" Phil asked.

"I forget—it was while Pfeffer was here."

Phil nodded sharply, and then stepped to the point in question. A piece of plastering as large as the rim of his hat had broken away, and as he stood near it he could not only hear voices in the other house, but with care, he believed that he could overhear what was being said.

And that room had been Mrs. Austin's.

The young detective's suspicions grew stronger. The man Pfeffer had come to Mrs. Sparks's, shown a strange liking for one certain room, though it was a miserable one, and he said money was no object with him, and had hired it under peculiar circumstances. Just after he entered the room a portion of the plastering broke away—though supposed to be tight before—and after this hole was made in the wall voices were quite distinct from Mrs. Austin's room.

Phil wondered if Pfeffer had ever taken the trouble to listen.

"The chap was a queer brick, assooredly," he said, sympathetically. "Was he inquisitive?—int'rested in other folkese's biz?"

"No."

"Never ketched him peekin' inter key-holes, nor the like?"

"No. I'll say that for him."

"Nor list'nin' at that hole in the wall whar the plasterin' is off?" Phil bluntly added.

"No—though now you mention it, he had a queer fancy of sitting right there a good deal. He said that the hole in the wall was a means of ventilation, and that it purified the room. He had queer fancies."

"Assooredly—pestiferously queer!" returned Phil, who had no doubt that Pfeffer sat there to play the listener.

The boy gave his head a short, quick nod, and then, still in pursuit of information, he continued:

"He liked fresh air, did he? Ever go up on the roof, ter git the odor o' roses arnd buttercups from Paradise Park?"

The sarcasm of this reference was lost upon the landlady, who saw only the practical part.

"He was up there once, to my knowledge. It was in the evening, and I came up unexpected, and he was on the roof. He seemed quite dashed, and apologized, but I told him it was all right if he would fasten the scuttle after him when he came in again."

"Perhaps he run away that way," suggested Connor.

"And flew into the air," added Rex, smiling.

"I am in earnest," said Connor. "Now that"

I think of it, I heard some one open the scuttle at about ten o'clock last night.

Rex and Phil exchanged glances; it was at that hour, soon after Mrs. Austin's death, that the unknown man appeared and began to fumble in her trunk.

"And in the morning Pfeffer was gone," concluded Connor. "What is more likely than that he was then running away? I think that he went out that way."

Evidence was wheeling into line, but more was forthcoming. Just then the front-room lodger, Schiebeck, came in, and when he was told that Pfeffer had run away, he had a story to tell.

"I saw Pfeffer last evening about half-past nine, and he was very much excited. I asked what was the trouble, and he said that a woman had just died in the next house. I asked him how he knew, and he said you told him, Mrs. Sparks."

"I never told him any such thing!" the landlady declared, sharply.

"He lied, of course."

"But be ye sure he said thart a woman had jest died next door, mister?" asked Five Points Phil.

"Certainly, I am."

Phil looked at Rex and nodded again. A few minutes after Mrs. Austin died, Pfeffer knew of it, and was greatly excited. This proved that he had listened, and that he was interested in the case, and the fact that Connor soon heard some one at the scuttle seemed to indicate that Pfeffer had at once hastened over the rooftops to the next building and made that illegal search of the trunk, representing himself as a policeman.

Just then Mrs. Sparks's one servant appeared.

"A letter fur Mither Pfeffer," she said.

"For Pfeffer!" cried the landlady, belligerently. "Well, now, that's good. I'll read the letter, and if I can trace that mean scamp I'll have the law of him!"

Rex unclosed his lips to tell her that the law would not uphold her in opening Pfeffer's letter, however badly he had used her, but the letter was already open.

It was short; she read it almost at a glance, and then it fluttered from her grasp.

"Oh! the murdering villain!" she cried; "it's a wonder I'm alive!"

Five Points Phil sprang forward, picked up the letter, and read it without permission from anybody. It affected him different from Mrs. Sparks. She was looking very much frightened, but Phil's eyes brightened, and he turned to Rex with another nod.

"Read that," he directed. "Ef we ain't hit the bull's-eye plum' center, I'm a pestiferous Hottentot!"

CHAPTER IV.

PHIL TAKES THE TRAIL.

REX took the letter and read as follows:

"Hurry up on your business, or the game will be lost. Too much activity in the other quarter. Don't hesitate to take any risk, for the end will justify the means. The documents must be had, if you are compelled to *slence the woman* to get them."

There was neither address nor signature.

"He meant to rob and murder me," exclaimed Mrs. Sparks, in horror.

Rex and Phil exchanged glances; they did not believe that the woman referred to in the letter was Mrs. Sparks. They had a clearer idea of what the letter meant than had the landlady.

"Le's we git away," whispered Phil, to his young friend; "I warnt ter talk this matter over with yer. Thar is a pestiferous mystery afoot, arnd I know it. Mrs. Sparks, marm, it occurs to me that when the writer o' this hyar letter finds thart Pfeffer ain't goin' ter git it, he may call hyar ter git it back. D'ye know ye'll be in a fix then?"

"How so?"

"It's a State Prison offense, or suthin' pestiferous bad, ter open other folks's letters."

"Great land! I never thought of that!" she gasped.

"Thar's only one way ter do now."

"What's that?"

"Vow you never got no letter as aforesaid. It ain't my way ter advise anybody ter do crooked work, fur the wicked get awfully laid out in the eend, but you see Pfeffer was a rascal, arnd it's only fair ter fight fire with fire."

"I believe you're right."

"I be, sure as you're settin' thar in that chair. Arsk Wrestling Rex. They call him the Pride o' the Sixth Ward, 'cause he kin throw any boy, man or other individoal o' his heft; his word is ter be took."

"Yes, Mrs. Sparks, I think it our duty to work against Pfeffer, as he has worked against us," Rex quietly added.

Just then the servant-girl appeared.

"There's a man down-stairs dat wants ter see ye's, Mrs. Sparks," she announced.

The landlady arose.

"Come to hire a room, probably," she remarked.

"No he hain't," the girl replied; "he has come ter git de letter fur Mither Pfeffer!"

Mrs. Sparks dropped back into her chair.

"Did you tell him such a letter had been received here, Lizzie?" she hoarsely gasped. "Did you tell him this, girl?"

"I did not!" Lizzie promptly replied. "Begorra, I've lived long enough in dis world to foind out dat the less annybody knows, de better she'll git along, begorra."

Five Points Phil caught the girl's hand and shook it with dangerous vigor.

"You're a trump card, you be!" he declared.

"Thart fellow down below ain't got a bit o' information yit, hez he? I mean erbout the letter."

"Not a bit, begorra."

Phil turned to Mrs. Sparks. His face was flushed with excitement, and the "detective fever" burned in his veins with full force.

"Hark ter me a minute!" he said, quickly.

"Thar is more in this matter than shows its head above ground, arnd ef we warnt ter foil some mean scamps we'll jest play 'em sharp p'int for sharp p'int, arnd never git weary. D'ye know what orter be did?"

"No."

"Wal, you jest go down as bold as a Noomidean lion, arnd face thart unknown cornemporary o' ours who warnts the letter, arnd vow thart no letter hez come fur Pfeffer at all. See?"

"Yes."

"Use him ez perlite ez though he was an alderman, arnd say ter him ter come ag'in—"

"I don't want him to come again."

"Great ginger! no; none on us don't; but we must fool him—pull the wool over his eyes, so ter exclaim. Ef you're ha'sh with him, he'll suspect arnd the fat will be in the fire. Fax is fax, arnd they're stubborn things."

"But why deceive him? I'd rather have him thrown out of my house."

"I'll tell ye jest why," responded Phil, beginning to despair of making her understand anything. "We want revenge on Pfeffer fur the great wrong he's done you by skippin' his board bill—we do, by ginger! Well, while you arnd he are talkin' I'll slip out o' ther house, arnd when he goes away I'll foller him. Mrs. Sparks, mum, I'll see thart you hev yer rent. Assooredly!"

Eager as Phil was he did not forget to humor the landlady's hobby, and his eyes had a very humorous gleam as he looked at her.

She, however, barely resisted the impulse to take the young detective to her bosom.

"You're a jewel!" she declared, "and I'll do all as you say. I'll talk so sweet to that man that I'll almost melt him."

So saying, she went down-stairs, and Phil and Rex followed her. They left the house, but as they did so, the former managed to get a look at the man without being seen himself. Once on the street corner he turned quickly upon his young friend.

"My b'loved corntemporary, we're on the track so quick; the sails is all up, arnd the ship is spankin' erlong like a Jarsey muskeeter arter gore, so ter speak. Now see hyar: Pfeffer is the man thart stole Mrs. Austin's papers, arnd it was the outcome o' a car'ful scheme. He hired thart partic'lar room in Sparksy's house ter work the game. Fax is fax, arnd they're stubborn things—pestiferous stubborn."

"I believe you're right, Phil."

"Assooredly! Wal, what next?"

"Next, looks to me as though we must hunt these schemers down."

"Jes' so—sartain! Now let me tell ye what's what. When that feller goes away I shall foller him, arnd try ter find out whar he puts up, but I want you ter stay right around hyar arnd keep yer eyes open."

"All right; you are a better detective than I, and I'll do just as you say. But see here, Phil, haven't we fallen afoul of a big case?"

"Why d'ye think so?"

"It looks to me as though Mrs. Austin was a far more important person than I ever suspected. To get certain papers of hers, Pfeffer hired that room and tried for them hard, but very quietly. Now, the anxiety to stop that letter shows that somebody is afraid."

"Right you be, Rex. I b'lieve we hev struck a trail which leads ter something big. It

wouldn't s'prise me ter know that thar was a pile o' money inter all this."

"To which Ella is now heiress?"

"Like ez not."

"Then she must have her rights."

"Assooredly!"

"She has but few friends, and it rests with you and me to see her righted."

"Jes' so! Arnd we goin' ter do it, my b'loved corntemporary. We're jumpin' at conclusions when we say thar is boodle in the case, but a good guess is sometimes an amazin' lever o' power. Hol' on!—hol' on! Thar comes Mrs. Sparks's visitor; you'll see me gittin' away on his trail like a skipper arter cheese!"

The man came out of the house, and then paused on the sidewalk and looked all around him. Unless Phil made an error of judgment, his manner was that of a man who has something to conceal, and is afraid that he and his transactions will become noticed by other men.

This particular person saw nothing suspicious. Several men, women and children were passing; and others were lounging around, but none seemed to be interested in him.

He started off up the street.

When he moved Five Points Phil also moved, but the lad showed the training which he had received in previous detective cases. Nothing could be more matter-of-fact and innocent than his manner.

Several times the man looked around, as though he feared pursuit, but there was no sign that he was followed.

In this way they went on until, passing through Crosby street, they neared Houston. They were getting near to Phil's own quarters, and he began to feel at home, when the man suddenly disappeared.

Of course there was nothing supernatural about this; he had simply dodged into a doorway with great quickness, and a plain desire to avoid being seen. Phil quietly passed; the man was not to be seen. Either the door had not been locked, or some one had been ready to admit him.

Phil went as far as the corner and took position in a doorway. He waited five minutes, but no one came out of the house. But in that time he had formed a resolution.

He crossed to a variety store, in which papers were also sold, where he had so often made purchases that he was well known to the man who kept it. He believed that it would be safe to question this man.

He did so. First of all he asked who lived in the house next to the one which the unknown had entered. He received full particulars; the party in question was an old resident, and the newsdealer could tell a good deal about him.

Then Phil asked about the next house.

The occupant was named Short; the speaker delivered papers to him; but he could tell no more. He had lived there a year; occasionally entered the store, but was a very reserved man. Seemed to be fifty years of age; business unknown. Might be a fine person, but the newsdealer would say in confidence that he did not like him.

That was all that Phil learned. He left the store, but had barely gained the street when the man whom he had lately followed came out of Short's. Looking around, he saw Phil and advanced toward him.

"Boy, do you live near here?" he asked.

"I do that," Phil promptly replied.

"Do you want a job?"

"Assooredly!"

"Then come in here!" and he pointed to the house of mystery.

CHAPTER V.

SOMETHING ABOUT THE PAST.

FIVE POINTS PHIL did not change expression in the least as he heard these words. Here was a chance offered to enter the house and learn more about its inmates, and if it was what it seemed, it was a most fortunate circumstance.

Phil, however, was not sure that it was. As cautious as he had been it was among the possibilities that he had been discovered, and that a trap lurked back of all this.

"I dunno as I 'zactly onderstand," he replied.

"I tell you that you can have a job by going in there," the stranger impatiently explained.

"Hard work?" questioned Phil.

"Lazy as most boys, ain't you? Well, this is not hard work; it is only to carry a letter."

"I'll do it, assooredly; but let me c'reck ye on one p'int. Boys ain't lazy; not by a long shot. Ef a boy thinks prudent he kin slaughter work the wu'st may, arnd ef he don't do it, it's 'cause he don't want ter misuse it. It's on the same

principle as a big boy hammerin' a small—'tain't right."

This argument seemed to be conclusive, and the guide let it go at that. They had reached the door of the house, and now entered.

What was before Phil he did not know, but his whole life had been one of adventure, and he was not disposed to lose a chance to get information. Where the guide went he would follow. It was not a long journey. Once in the house they passed through the first door which opened from the hall and entered a parlor, or sitting-room—whichever it might be called. One man was there, and he and Phil looked at each other attentively.

Phil saw a gray-haired, rather severe-faced man of fifty years, whom he at once set down as the Mr. Short mentioned by the newsdealer.

The master of the house saw a boy who looked to be fifteen, but might be a year or two older; a rather small but very compact, hardy-looking youth, with a bold, frank, and somewhat humorous face. Plainly dressed, he was evidently one of the lower rank in life, but that he was smart and intelligent could be seen at a glance.

"Here's a boy, sir," said the guide.

"So I see. Well, young fellow, do you know what I want of you?"

"Assuredly not," Phil coolly replied.

"I want a letter carried."

"Is it heavy?"

"Don't talk nonsense, boy. The question is, if I give you the job, will you do it faithfully?"

"Great ginger! yes. Ez a rool I don't take hefty jobs but when I do grapple with 'em, I do my dooty. No marn can say I don't. Ef ye warnt me ter carry a letter, I'll do it in the best o' shape."

"I want it delivered without delay."

This unusual caution made Phil eager to have the job; if the letter was not important, Short would not be so anxious about it.

"Thar ain't a boy in Gotham can outrun me," he confidently asserted.

"You shall have the job."

The speaker turned to the table, folded a sheet of paper upon which he had just finished writing, put it in an envelope, sealed the latter and gave it to Phil, together with a dollar.

"Now be off!" he added.

"I'm gone!" Phil replied, and he did go with alacrity.

One reason of this was that the letter had been sealed before his eyes, and as it could not yet be dry, he hoped to be able to unseal it and read the note. He hurried around the nearest corner and made the attempt. The envelope was a poor one anyway, and he was very successful in his attempt; the resistance was very slight, and he soon had it open.

The note was as follows:

"The attempt to recover the letter has thus far been unsuccessful; the landlady said that it had not arrived; and though another effort may be more successful, I have some fears that harm may come of it. On the whole, I think you had better leave New York for awhile. Go West—to St. Louis, say—or if you would like a sea-voyage, we will accommodate you with money enough to keep you two months in London. As well as you did your work, suspicion may rest upon you; I want you to keep out of sight for awhile. Visit me, or write."

"A. E. Short."

Five Points Phil gave his head a sharp nod.

"I'm on the track, assuredly!" he thought, "and o' all my acquaintances o' the pestiferous sort, I think Mr. A. E. Short is the most ter be admired. This 'ere epistle is ad'ressed ter 'D. Haskins,' but it's clear thart Haskins is Pfeffer. Wal, Short bosses him, and he bosses the 'bull roost, it seems. Short is a tall figger in this case; he's the big toad o' the puddle. Wal, it's Short that I want ter investigate. Fax is fax and they're stubborn things."

While speaking Phil had been carefully re-sealing the letter, and it was so well done that he was delighted.

"D. Haskins' will never know it's been tampered with," he thought, as he went along once more.

He intended to deliver the letter faithfully—the address was a house on Rivington street—and, if possible, learn something at the other end of the line.

He had great curiosity to know who had possession of the papers stolen from Mrs. Austin, but if Pfeffer was acting as Short's agent, merely, it was likely that the latter had them.

"Shorty is my game!" Phil muttered. "The small villains don't amount ter nothin', but the big 'un must be investigated. Thar's a myst'ry er bout Mrs. Austin, and Shorty worked ter beat her out o' lawful things she should hev. I warnt ter know why, and I will know."

He walked along in a grim mood until Riv-

ington street was reached. The house to which the given number directed him was not the most pleasant he had seen. It was old, and had a certain grim, cold, forbidding appearance which seemed to say: "Let me alone. I am not sociable, and I don't want to be spoken to. Keep off!"

Phil, however, defied the unspoken warning.

He rung the bell, and a bony old woman appeared.

"Ef you please, I'd like ter see Mr. Haskins," Phil said.

"Is he here?"

"Wal, I s'pose so; I was ter d'liver this lotter ter him here, in person."

"Most likely he's in the shop. You can see."

"Where's the shop?"

"Go right through this passage, and go up the steps in the entry beyond."

So saying the woman went into a room at one side, seeming wholly indifferent.

"Good chance fur a burglar hyar," thought Phil, as he obeyed her rather vague direction.

He had no trouble in finding his way, and when he had reached the top of the stairs, he opened another door beyond. He saw a carpenter's shop, or, at least, a room very much like one, though it seemed to have its peculiarities. It was in great confusion, being filled with various articles, littered on the floor with waste and covered all over with dust—the windows being literally coated.

Phil heard the sound of voices, and advanced. A few paces brought him into sight of two men.

It needed but one glance to convince him that one was Pfeffer; he fitted the description of that person perfectly. Phil was still moving forward, intense upon delivering the letter at once, when he was brought to a halt by something said by the second man.

"Short would make it hot fur me if he knowed I had let on," he observed.

"Well, I'm not going to tell," declared Pfeffer. "I'd think it kind of you to let me into the case more. I suppose you know all."

"I know as much as Short, ef he is higher up in the world than I be. I was servant in the family a good twenty year."

"A very ancient, honorable family, I believe."

"As old as any in New York."

"But unlucky."

"Wal, they were that; ill luck seemed ter foler them, man an' woman, all the time."

The speaker had not seen Five Points Phil, and he, anxious to know of whom they were talking, had stepped back and was concealed by a box.

"All their money couldn't stave off the ill luck, eh?" pursued Pfeffer.

"No; an' the last tragedy broke the fam'ly up, ye see; so I left an' come here an' opened this shop—"

"Just so. Well, what is your theory about the tragedy, anyhow?"

"Lord bless you! I never had one; I didn't dare."

"What did Short think?"

"That I don't know."

"He was active in it, wasn't he?"

"Oh! yes; he's always been mixed up with the family; he an' his afore him. I often wonder ef my young lady is alive. It was a terrible thing for her—I hope she's gettin' along wal."

"You forget why she run away, old man."

"I don't forgit anything," Pratt stoutly replied. "It is one thing to be accused, an' another to be guilty. I'm afeard you've ben lettin' Short p'ison yer mind, man. Does Short know where my young lady is now?"

The speaker broke off suddenly, as though he had had a new idea, and looked sharply at Pfeffer.

Five Points Phil leaned forward eagerly, scarcely venturing to breathe. The idea was strong in his mind that he was hearing the late Mrs. Austin spoken of, and he was absorbed in what was being said.

Suddenly, however, Pfeffer sprang to his feet, dashed forward too quickly to be avoided, and seized Phil by the collar.

"You miserable sneak!" he hissed, "how dare you spy upon us? I'll have your life to pay for this!"

CHAPTER VI.

TWO HONEST SPORTING MEN.

It was evening, and Wrestling Rex was seated at the window of his room, looking out into the street. It was not the most delightful of views; few city streets can be called that, and Baxter street cannot by any stretch of the fancy.

Rex did not think of this as he sat there; he was looking down and watching for one particular person. Five Points Phil had not returned, and his friend was beginning to worry about him. He knew that, as a rule, Phil was abundantly able to take care of himself, but he had followed a man away who might be one of the worst of de-peradoes.

It did not escape Rex's mind that Phil was only a boy—perhaps he had followed the stranger into a nest of enemies and come to grief.

This fear, vague at first, grew stronger as the hours passed on, until Rex began to be seriously worried.

Something finally occurred to divert his attention, this being the arrival of two men to see him. One was Matthew Solace, a very fat, self-satisfied gentleman with a clean-shaven face, which looked as though it had been oiled; a tall, white hat, which he wore over one eye, to the neglect of the back part of his head, thereby getting a mastiff-like look; a big, flashy watch-chain, and other like characteristics.

Mr. Solace was a great man in the Sixth Ward. He dabbled in politics, and was well known in court, because of the frequency with which he appeared there to beg clemency for his constituents when they got into trouble with the law for some such offense as robbery, assault, or a drunken broil. But it was as a sporting character that Mr. Solace flourished, and horse-racing, pugilism, dog-fighting and the like found in him a great admirer.

Very popular was he in the Sixth Ward. Had there not been other great men to rival him, he would have been considered the greatest man alive. Such trifles as presidents and governors could not compare with Mr. Solace.

He was the financial backer of Rex Peters in his capacity as a wrestler. The great man had heard of Rex and his proficiency, and had "brought him out." The lad had since then engaged in two matches in a small way, as befitted one of his years, and Mr. Solace was very proud of him.

What Rex thought of Solace will be seen later.

The man who had now come to see the boy with Solace was a tall, lank young man with a mustache which, not being large, was turned up at the ends very fiercely—a bantam mustache, one might say. The gentleman had a tall, white hat; a very "loud" suit of clothes of a checkered pattern; a huge, imitation diamond pin; and a cane large enough for the statue of the Goddess of Liberty to wield. It seemed.

"Rex," quoth Mr. Solace, "this is Gerald St. Percy, a sporting gent of renown. He's come ter see yer."

Rex said that he was glad to see the second visitor, but the statement was a polite fiction. He did not like the looks of Mr. St. Percy; in fact, he had yet to see one of Matthew Solace's friends whom he did like.

When he made his first match at wrestling he did it with the idea that it would be very much like having a friendly bout with one of his boy companions, but he was finding out his mistake.

Sporting men, their ways and their influences were not to his liking.

"Glad to see you, Wrestling Rex," said Gerald St. Percy, jauntily. "I've heard of you, often; tried to get around to see you down the Houston street Spider, but couldn't make the rifle. Some of us were out the day before, and we got a jag on. That settled it."

"You missed a good thing," averred Matthew Solace, with an oily smile.

"No doubt. By the way, I hear great things predicted for your young friend—they call you the Pride of the Sixth Ward, eh, Rex? Well, in a year or two you'll make even Lewis, the 'Jap,' and all the rest of 'em bustle."

"I always bring out good 'uns," said Mr. Solace.

"That's a fact, Mat."

"I brought out Hit-hard Hank as a 'pug.' He never had the gloves on in public until I took him up."

"He's a good 'un, is Hank," said St. Percy, with enthusiasm. "Ned Scratley lost a century betting against him when met the Hoboken Kid."

"No business to bet against Hank. By the way, what is Scratley doing now?"

"Giving 'tips' on races."

Mr. Solace laughed softly.

"Why, Scratley don't know a horse from a hitching-post, nor would any 'ring' let such a man in."

"That don't prevent his giving tips."

"Not a bit of it."

"He's got his 'ad.' in several papers, and the fools bite well. It's surprising, Mat, how big a

fool the average clerk is. It's his ambition to win on the races. He let's on to his chums that he's a judge of horse-flesh, but, really, he don't know the first thing about it. A fever to win on the races runs in his veins, and he sends his cash for a 'tip.' Scratley is plucking his pigeons right and left—and oh! his tips are so valuable. I'll bet you a V, Mat, that you may put a 2:20 racer beside of a four minute nag and Scratley can't tell which is the better horse. But he can give tips to pigeons—oh! yes!"

"There's lots of funny business going on," agreed Matthew, with his oily smile, and St. Percy laughed and snapped his fingers for some mysterious reason.

"Shall you be around at the dog-fight, old man?" continued St. Percy.

"Friday's event?"

"Yes."

"Oh! I'll be there; I've got an X up with a young dude down on Wall street. He's ambitious to be a sport, the dear chappie is; and I'll help him to the extent of taking his ten. He thinks he's 'up' on dogs, but he don't know the A B C of it—another pigeon to pluck, Gerald. What would we do without these soft-heads to fill our pockets?"

"Bless them and their money!" St. Percy uttered, humorously.

"Their money is good," Mr. Solace admitted, smiling more broadly than ever.

Wrestling Rex gazed at the men in disgust. His experience in the "sporting" arena had been brief, and he was inclined to think that it would come to an end very soon. He was not pleased with the men he met. He gave the profession the benefit of the doubt, and admitted to himself that his experience *might* possibly be an exception, but those whom he met as patrons of the various "sports" were flashy men who looked like blacklegs, and would-be gay young men about town.

The latter seemed to be chiefly clerks, and he judged that they wished to add to their slender income by betting. What was their success? As far as he had observed they came in only to fall afoul of those "in the ring"—the flashy men—who proceeded to pluck them like pigeons, as St. Percy would say.

Rex Peters was an honest, upright boy, and he was getting very much disgusted with his life. It had only just begun, and he was resolved to end it promptly.

Solace, St. Percy and their fellow sporting men digusted him thoroughly.

St. Percy turned to the boy wrestler.

"Well, my young man, are you going to down the West Street Wonder?"

"I'm going to try," Rex modestly replied.

"You don't feel sure, eh?"

"Why, yes," Rex slowly returned. "As long as Mr. Solace is my backer, I'll say that I have all the confidence in the world that I am going to win."

St. Percy and Solace exchanged glances.

"Sam Uppery is a good 'un; he's not called the West Street Wonder for nothing," cautioned St. Percy.

"No doubt."

"Yet you think you'll win?"

"I do."

Rex answered quietly, but very firmly.

"You are poor, I believe?"

"Yes, sir."

"And what you get out of the match will be a great blessing to you?"

"Certainly."

St. Percy glanced at Solace, and then drew his chair closer to Rex.

"Suppose," he said, lowering his voice and trying to make it very pleasant and persuasive, "that you could make more by losing?"

"Why, I get nothing if I lose."

Mr. St. Percy laughed very softly and agreeably.

"But suppose some one would give you a good round sum to lose on purpose?" he said, coming directly to the point.

Rex's face flushed perceptibly.

"Speak plainly!" he said, in a voice which should have taught the sharper caution.

"I will, my boy. You see, this match is creating a good deal of excitement, and there is a chance to win a good deal of money if the thing is worked right. Unfortunately, it is the general opinion that you will best the West Street Wonder, and we don't see how we can place our money. Now if we bet *against* you, we can get odds, but we know if the thing goes on its merits you will down Sam Uppery."

"Well?"

"Well, if the thing is 'fixed,' with Uppery as winner, your friends can make a good thing,

and you can pull in two hundred on one stake. See?"

"Just so. You want me to sell the match."

"Putting it that way—yes."

"I decline!"

Rex spoke shortly and sharply, and the faces of both his companions suddenly became gloomy.

"Decline?" echoed St. Percy.

"That's what I said."

"But—"

"Mr. Solace is my backer—do you suppose I am going to lose his money thus?"

It was a remark to test the great man of the Sixth Ward. Rex felt sure that he knew how Solace stood, but he wanted it in plain words.

"My dear boy," exclaimed Matthew, with his most unctuous manner, "don't hesitate on my account, I beg of you. I can easily set myself right; in fact, if you will oblige St. Percy I shall be glad, and it will give me a chance to rake in a good-sized boodle."

"But what of those who bet on me in good faith?"

"None of our friends will do that; I'll let 'em on."

"Others may."

"They must look out for themselves," indifferently returned Solace.

"If I am a better man than Sam Uppery," firmly declared Rex, "those who bet on me can rely upon me to help them out. I won't sell out; I'll win, if I can!"

CHAPTER VII.

A WAGER IS MADE.

THE two schemers gazed at the boy in speechless dismay and anger. Solace had known him well enough so that he had entertained grave fears that their attempt would result just like this, and he had duly cautioned St. Percy, but when the cold fact met them it was a severe blow, despite all that had been said.

St. Percy had his part to play, however, and he went ahead.

"Nonsense! You're joking, my lad."

"I am in earnest," Rex firmly replied.

"You won't lose the match?"

"Not if I can help it."

"But remember that I have offered you two hundred dollars to lose it."

"No use, Mr. St. Percy."

"Is two hundred of no use to you?"

"It would be of great use, but I don't propose to get it dishonestly."

"Oh, nonsense! Now see here, Rex; let me open your eyes a bit. You're new in sporting matters, and don't just understand how it goes. I want to say, and Solace will back me up, that nearly every event is 'fixed.' It's better to put up your money on a dead sure thing than on a venture, but the event is settled in advance by mutual consent, and when it's over those who are in the ring pocket the cash, while the outsiders—the 'suckers' they have caught—get left. See?"

"That is all plain."

"Consequently," put in Matthew Solace, very blandly, "if a wrestler sticks to his friends, his friends will stick to him."

"You can throw me over as soon as you see fit!" indignantly replied Rex. "I think I've had about enough of sporting life—why don't you call it robbery, and be done with it?"

"My dear boy, you don't understand—"

"Yes, I do; I have suspected for some time that the business I was temporarily in was all a swindle, and now you confess it!"

Both men smiled. They did not object to be called swindlers, but the danger of losing Rex made them uneasy. Their smiles were forced and unhappy, as it were.

"But remember the money you can make," urged St. Percy, as he jingled some loose silver.

"I don't want to make it that way. Mr. Solace, I suppose my match with Sam Uppery is a fixture, so I will not back out, but after that I shall retire. I don't think this business will suit me."

Mr. Solace shifted his position uneasily, but St. Percy was more determined. He renewed the attack upon Rex, and presented his side of the case in its most alluring lights.

"Money!—money!—money! That was the burden of his cry. Money was the lever that moved the world. Without money a man was a nobody; with it, he was a power. Labor was a bore; it broke down the system; it wearied him who bound himself to it. If Rex Peters could get a good living without work, simply by betraying the more honest class of bettors—what of it? It would be nobody's business; Rex would be a fool to miss the chance."

Such was the drift of St. Percy's argument, but Rex was not convinced.

The young wrestler was honest by nature and training, and now that he plainly saw the kind of men and influences he had gone among, he had no more desire to keep in the "sporting" arena.

What he had seen of sporting men seemed to show that they were nearly all alike. They were flashy, ignorant, dissipated and unscrupulous; they were men it was well to let alone. There might be many honest members of their profession—no doubt there was now and then one—but he had seen that every influence arising from the life was demoralizing.

He wanted no more of it.

"I will wrestle Sam Uppery," was his ultimatum; "then I retire from the life."

They left the room, and then Rex, who had not been able to fix his mind wholly upon one subject, looked out of the window again. A shade of disappointment crossed his face; there was still no sign of Five Points Phil.

"It's very strange," murmured Rex; "he ought to have been back three hours ago. I hope no harm has come to him!"

Solace and St. Percy left the house and walked down the street to Paradise Park. They went in utter silence until they had passed the Mission, when the latter put out his hand and stopped his companion.

"Well, what are we going to do about it?" he asked, in an angry voice.

"I see no hope of moving that obstinate young viper," replied Solace, with more venom than seem proper for a great man to use.

"Nor I."

"It's bad."

"Infernal bad! Must I give up my designs on Willis Landerson?"

"No!—by the fiends, no!" Solace asserted.

"But what can I do? He's probably at the hotel now, waiting to close the bet, and I can't take him up because that villainous boy is a fool!"

Solace looked carefully around, and then, lowering his voice, replied:

"See here, St. Percy, you go ahead and scoop in that fellow; I'll see that Rex Peters don't win. I've already laid one bet on Sam Uppery, against Rex, and I ain't going to lose the seeds. Rex says he'll wrestle, and you can bet high that he don't win!"

"How'll you work it?"

"How did Rubber-leg Joe lose the go-as-you-please race last winter?"

"Drugged!" whispered St. Percy.

"Just so. Well, my hand ain't lost its cunning."

"Mat, will you 'fix' the Pride?"

"I will. Go on and bag your nabob; put every dollar you can raise on the West Street Wonder. Rex will lose that match—and when it's over, he and I are done. Confusion seize the fellow! I'll make the Sixth Ward so hot for him that he'll be glad to get out of it!"

St. Percy grasped his friend's hand; they remained in conversation some little time longer; and then, while Solace went through Elm street, the young man went on to Broadway and walked up that thoroughfare.

On the way he had time to meditate, and though he had left his partner in iniquity in a confident mood, he was rather shaky when he entered one of the large hotels above Prince street. He had come to keep an appointment, and was soon shaking hands with a young man of about his own age.

This was Willis Landerson, the man he had mentioned to Matthew Solace. Landerson was very well dressed, and his whole appearance indicated that he was of the upper rank in life. Expensive as his garments were, they were not flashy and he made a striking contrast to St. Percy. He would have been good-looking, too, had it not been for the brand of dissipation indelibly fixed upon his face.

He had the appearance of a man who, being blessed with the good things of life, was fast going to ruin, and his first act was to ask St. Percy to have a drink.

Then they settled down to talk.

"It's getting late," said Landerson, "and I will come right to the point. Is your friend ready to put up a thousand on the West Street Wonder?"

"I haven't been able to see him yet," replied St. Percy, still shaky.

"Have you written?"

"No. I tried to see him in person."

"I don't like this delay. I am dead sure the Pride will win, but I am not so anxious to make a thousand that I am going to chase Uppery's supporters around town."

"You shall not be disappointed again; I'll surely see my friend to-morrow."

"And you think he will bet on Upperly?"

"Yes."

"Rex Peters will win."

"That remains to be seen."

"Perhaps you would like to bet on Upperly?"

St. Percy hesitated, and then replied:

"I haven't the money, just now."

"Stir up your friend, then. If the faith is in him that the Wonder can down the Pride, let him show it. I am no beggarly clerk who wants to bet twenty-five dollars; I go in to do business when I strike. I want to stake a thousand on Peters."

Landerson spoke thickly. St. Percy knew him of old; he had seldom seen him strictly sober, and knew that, having money, he would as soon risk five thousand dollars as one. Landerson was rich, as he was reckless. He would have been a rare pigeon to pluck only, unfortunately for sharpers, he had good judgment.

He rarely made a bet which, if the matter was decided upon its merits, was likely to leave him the loser. This, and this only, had saved him from disaster in the past. He was going to ruin rapidly, and his moral sense of right was blunted, but he was shrewd enough to protect himself from sharpers.

St. Percy did not answer; he was thinking of that Solace's promise, and wondering if it was safe to bet against the Pride of the Sixth Ward. He could not afford to despise money. He lived by his wits; what money he had was obtained by dishonest tricks; and though he now had a full pocket—for him—he wanted to put it out only when he was sure of doubling it.

Landerson was not so much intoxicated that he failed to read a part of his meditations.

"Come, St. Percy," he said, "I'd like to bet you."

"I haven't a thousand."

"Make it five hundred, then."

"I have that, but I need it for other purposes."

"The match will soon come off; make the bet, and if your luck is equal to your faith you can double your money on the West Street Wonder."

There was a new order of things; the pigeon was tempting the sharper. But Landerson was anxious to bet, not to win money, but for the excitement. He craved constant excitement, and that and liquor were killing him.

"Come, is it a go?" he added.

St. Percy remembered Solace's promise; he put his hand into his pocket and took out five hundred dollars. It was a vast sum for him—sharper that he was he shivered—but the die was cast.

"So much on Sam Upperly, and against Rex Peters!" he said, in a fairly firm voice.

"Good! We'll let Colonel Rugg hold the money."

The money was duly placed in the colonel's hands, and then the bettors had another drink and separated. St. Percy walked away in a mixed state of mind.

"It's done!" he muttered, "and I make or break on it. There was a surer way to place the money, but it's done and I rely upon Mat Solace to pull me through. Rex Peters must not win now. Win! He must—he *will* lose! If Solace don't drug him I will; ay, and I'll fix the young villain so that he'll never trouble me again!"

CHAPTER VIII.

WHAT WAS IN THE BOX.

REX still stood at the window and looked out into the street, but he did not see Five Points Phil. He had grown very much worried. He could not account for the young detective's prolonged absence. He had started out to follow the unknown man to wherever he stopped, and had been gone long enough to go to High Bridge and back, but—he had not returned.

As the minutes wore on Rex grew more troubled. Had some great misfortune occurred to his friend? They had suspected that the stranger was a desperate man. What was more likely than that Phil had been discovered, lured into some trap, and foully used?

Rex shivered at the thought.

And there he stood and watched the street, but all his watching went for nothing—Phil did not return.

Some one else finally came in—the man with whom Rex lived. As before said, his name was Toffling, but he was more commonly called "Umbrella Eph," on account of the humble business he followed. He mended umbrellas, aided by his wife. Rex believed that this was not a necessity with them, and that they had money enough to carry them, in a modest way, through the remaining days of their life, but

they were cheerful old people who found pleasure in a moderate amount of work.

Rex had been with them ever since he could remember. He had been told that his mother died in their room—she having lodged next to them—but he did not remember her. He only knew that they had been the same as parents to him; that they had always been kind, and he had been as well provided for as their humble circumstances would allow.

Umbrella Eph came in and set two dilapidated umbrellas in the corner.

"This weather is terrible," he declared.

"Very pleasant, I should say, Uncle Eph," Rex replied, absently.

"That's jest it—too pleasant by fur. Why can't it rain? Who wants umbrellas mended this weather? Who wears out umbrellas this weather?"

"Never mind; it's bound to rain soon."

"The paper said 'Clear and cool,' this morning."

Mr. Toffling belonged to that class of people who eagerly consult the weather predictions every morning with rapt interest, and of all the class, few could excel Eph in interest. He read nothing but weather predictions and his Bible, but to each of these he gave a good deal of attention.

"It may not be so to-morrow," observed Rex.

"What we need," said Mr. Toffling, with emphasis, "is a soakin' three-days' rain. If it comes it'll keep umbrellas wet all the time, people will set 'em down handle up, the water will gather in the folds near the top, and lo! the umbrella cloth will rot. Ha! I'd like to see a three-days' rain!"

The umbrella-mender went to the paper, and, having found it, read the predictions through three times. It made no difference to him if the day was past; he frequently read the predictions back for a week, and derived great consolation from them.

"It's a great mistake with makers o' umbrellas that they make 'em so good," he continued. "They don't look ahead an' see that others must live. If I had the makin' on 'em, no umbrella would last over ten days!"

"Uncle Eph," suddenly interrupted Rex, "what is to be done with Ella Austin?"

Toffling had begun to fill his pipe. He devoted considerable time to the task before he answered.

"She ain't found no relatives, then?"

"No."

Umbrella Eph lighted his pipe deliberately, and then sent a cloud of smoke soaring upward.

"Ef she don't find 'em," he replied, "an' no rich folks wants ter 'dopt her, I allow that the old lady an' me will 'dopt her."

He nodded toward the room where his wife was when he spoke of "the old lady."

"Would you do that, Uncle Eph?" cried Rex.

"Ain't in me ter see a small child want," the old man returned. "I feel poor jest now, an' shall until it rains, but while I kin git an umbrella ter mend I won't turn my back on an orphan."

He paused, drew a long whiff at the pipe, and humorously added:

"I'm an orphan myself."

Considering that he was seventy years old, this did not seem so very strange.

Rex seized his old friend's hand and shook it warmly.

"Uncle Eph, you're the noblest man I ever knew!"

Toffling took three long whiffs at his pipe.

"As noble as Solace, an' yer other sportin' friends?" he slowly asked.

Rex's face flushed.

"Why do you ask that, Uncle Eph?"

The umbrella-mender was not satisfied with less than five whiffs this time.

"Rex," he then answered, "I am of the opinion that it will be best fur you ter do no more wrestlin', but cut loose from Mat Solace, an' all his sort. He's a prime favorite in the Sixth Ward, I admit, but he ain't the sort o' a man I like, an' while you foller his lead you'll be exposed ter temptation all the time. Don't blame me fur this, lad, fur I think ye eighteen-carat fine; an' it's 'cause I want ye ter stay so that I say—cut loose from Mat Solace!"

"Uncle Eph," was the prompt reply, "your words are those of wisdom; I've seen all that I care to of so-called sporting life. There may be good men in it—I won't undertake to say—but I haven't struck them. I've seen only rough, dissipated men."

"I'm glad you're tired of it."

"I drifted into it unconsciously," Rex con-

tinued. "Matthew Solace saw me wrestling for fun; he offered to put me into it as a business. The money tempted me, and I confess that I was rather pleased at being noticed by such a man as Solace. I didn't know him then."

"But you do now, eh?"

"Yes. He is a sporting man, and he says he is every inch that sort of a man. He is interested in horse and foot-races, pugilism, wrestling, dog-fights and the like, and when not at any such place he is at his liquor saloon. It sickens me to think of it, but, for fear you may think my expression rather late, let me say that he has only just begun to let me see him as he is."

Toffling nodded emphatically; he was pleased by the turn of affairs.

At this moment the umbrella-mender's wife brought Ella Austin into the room. The child had wept freely for her lost mother, and now her youthful spirits had yielded to Mrs. Toffling's efforts to make her cheerful, and she was in a more contented mood. The old lady bore a pasteboard box in her hands.

"We have found this among Mrs. Austin's things, and we will examine it now."

Ella had gone to Rex's side, and when Umbrella Eph saw that she was not listening, he spoke in a low tone to his wife.

"No clew to her folks yet, is there?"

"No."

"There was a mystery about Mrs. Austin," said the old man, emphatically.

"But nothing bad."

"Of course not—of course not!" he hastily agreed. "That woman was an angel, an' the child is another. It'll be hard fur her ef her folks ain't found, but I allow that we hadn't ought ter let her suffer."

"We hadn't, father."

"Nor we won't!"

"That's a good man," Mrs. Toffling, admiringly replied. "We ain't got much, an' we mean it fur Rex, but that child must not suffer."

Ella and Rex now came forward.

"Is there anything of importance in the box?" the youth asked.

"We will see. Sit you down, all of you, and I will look."

Mrs. Toffling placed the box upon her knees, removed the cover which had been tied on, and the search began. Ella watched with childish curiosity, but the others felt a deeper interest. The impression was in their minds—and it was strong in that of Rex—that if the relatives of the late Mrs. Austin could be found, Ella would not be a penniless child. Mrs. Toffling, saw that her suspicions were aroused, declared that there had been much in Mrs. Austin's life to indicate that she had a secret, even as her manners were those of a lady of the higher rank in life.

The box was nearly full of papers and other things, but most of them were wholly unimportant now. There were receipts for the payment of bills, and various odds and ends such as most persons accumulate, without any clear idea why, if at all, they are of any consequence.

Mrs. Toffling neared the bottom of the box without having made a discovery.

"I'm afraid there is nothing here," she observed.

Eph glanced at the paper which contained the weather prediction. He had decided that he would have to adopt Ella, and was wishing that a big rain storm might begin, to spoil people's umbrellas and add to his work.

"What's this?"

Mrs. Toffling had reached a small, flat package, which was tied around with a string. The latter she removed; the paper she unfolded, and then a photograph lay in her hand.

It was that of an old gentleman, and, according to appearances, a well-dressed man. The face was smooth-shaven except for a fringe of beard beneath his chin, and it was a face to attract and hold attention. Strength of character was to be read everywhere. The jaws were broad and heavy; the mouth tightly-closed and severe; and the large, steady eyes looked coldly forth from under heavy brows.

The original of that picture had been a man to fear, perhaps to respect—but not to love, in the full sense of the word.

All four of the party pressed forward to get a look at the picture, but Rex's attention was suddenly arrested by an exclamation from Mrs. Toffling.

She was looking at the face in what seemed wonder and perplexity.

"Do you know who it is, aunt?" he asked.

But Mrs. Toffling did not seem to hear him. She passed the picture to her husband with the single word:

"See!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE VICTIM OF THE ROUGHS.

UMBRELLA EPH bent over the picture. His eyesight was not of the best, and he had to rub his spectacles before he could satisfy himself. Rex watched him closely, yet only with curiosity.

Something like wonder became expressed upon the old man's face; then it gave place to doubt; and that, in turn, to surprise, as he directed his gaze toward his wife.

"Why, I believe—"

Thus far he had spoken impulsively, but Mrs. Toffling put her hand over her lips.

"Yes, it's a clew," she interrupted; "if we can only find out who he is."

"But it seems ter me—"

"Yes, yes; of course we'll investigate. The children understand that, father; now don't say anything you can't prove true. Don't make any promises; don't say anything; we'll do what we can. Now let me finish looking through the box."

Umbrella Eph was silenced, and when his gaze wandered to Rex's face, it was suddenly averted, as he saw that Rex was looking at him.

Rex was an active-minded boy, and he had not been blind to the outward meaning of this scene; its real meaning he could not surmise. He knew that both Mrs. Toffling and Eph had seen something in the picture which was not only familiar, but which surprised them; and that the old man would have given utterance to his thought, under the impulse of the moment, had not his wife so resolutely stopped him.

What did all this mean? Rex was surprised and perplexed. If they had any idea who the original of the picture was, why did they not mention it? Above all, why did they look at him so peculiarly, as though he was the one who was interested in the case?

The youth's gaze wandered back to the box, where the old lady was just reaching the bottom, and he noticed that her hands trembled. This was something unusual for her, and he felt sure that it proceeded from agitation.

"There is nothing more," said Mrs. Toffling.

"Then the picture is the only clew?" returned Rex.

"Yes."

"Who do you suppose it represents?"

"I don't know, Rex."

"Have you never seen any one who looked like it?"

"Never."

Mrs. Toffling answered quickly, too quickly for the boy to have much confidence in her statement. What was she keeping back? He could not guess, but he knew them so well that he felt sure that they were not withholding anything from a dishonorable motive.

They were thoroughly honest.

"Ella," said the boy, after a pause, "will you go to my room and see if you can find my knife?"

It was a simple device to get her away for a few moments, and it worked well. Glad to oblige him, the child lighted an extra lamp and glided away.

"Now," continued Rex, "may I ask what you have discovered?"

"Discovered!" repeated Mrs. Toffling, with a start.

"Yes."

"I don't understand."

"I could see by your manner, and that of Uncle Eph, that this picture told you something. What was it? Do you know the man?"

"Haven't I just told you, No?" asked the old lady, a troubled expression upon her face.

"Ah! but Ella was here then."

"So you think that we kept something back for Ella's sake?"

"Yes. It was plain to me that both you and Uncle Eph were agitated when you saw the picture, and Uncle Eph would have spoken plainly if you hadn't stopped him. Now I am not a child, and Five Points Phil and I want to help Ella. I wish you'd tell me what you know about the picture—for I know you saw something familiar about it."

Mrs. Toffling was too much confused to reply at once, while Umbrella Eph, catching up the paper, tried to read the weather predictions aloud. His eyesight was very bad just then, and he made a wretched jumble of it.

"For New England an' Eastern New York, slightly warmer, snowy weather; generally fair, with heavy fall of rain, an' mercury below zero."

Having read this remarkable prediction, which existed only in his mind, for he had not seen a word, the old man looked up with a reso-

lute determination to turn conversation to the subject of weather and umbrellas, but Mrs. Toffling laid her hand kindly upon Rex's shoulder.

"My boy," she replied, "I see that it's no use trying to hide anything from you. Now let me ask you one question: If I tell you it is best so, are you not willing to let this explanation wait a while?"

There was only one answer to make when his kind old friend spoke in that tone.

"I will, certainly; but please bear in mind that Five Points Phil has regularly taken up the trail to find out who Ella's friends are, and if you can help him and me—"

"We ought not to keep anything back. I agree with you, and we won't, for long. But, wait a bit, Rex; wait just a little."

"The weather predictions for the West," interrupted Uncle Eph, "are ter the effeck that rain may be looked fur. I wish we was in St. Louis or Chicago—the rain will stir up the umbrella trade awazin'!"

The old man looked benignly over his spectacles at his wife, while Rex went to the window and looked out. No sign of Five Points Phil. Rex shook his head gloomily; he had grown decidedly anxious.

As he glanced at the clock he saw that it was half-past ten, and, beset with fresh fear, he went out to the street. Several persons were going and coming, but there was no sign of Phil.

"I'm afraid he's in trouble!" muttered Rex. "It looks as though those scoundrels had trapped him, and if they have, I'm afraid it's all over with Phil."

Rex had not lived all his life in Gotham without being aware that there were scores of men in the city who would as soon take human life as that of a beast. While he stood there he had a practical illustration of the fact.

Looking down the street he saw a man advancing whose every movement proclaimed that he had drunk altogether too much liquor. He staggered as he walked, and his progress resembled that of one so far gone in intoxication that his movements were purely mechanical.

He was young and well dressed, and as Rex noticed the gold watch-chain which dangled conspicuously from his pocket he shook his head.

"Bad place for a man like him to be at this hour, when drunk. He would make rare game for some tough, and he's not in condition to help himself."

Even as these thoughts passed through the boy's mind he saw two rough-looking men issue from a dark doorway and start after the drunken man. At the very first Rex recognized the fact that their intentions were hostile, and, obeying a natural impulse, he started toward them.

He was not soon enough.

They were already beside the drunken man, and Rex saw something raised which looked like a slung-shot. It descended, and their victim, heavily smitten, dropped to the sidewalk.

Another moment and they were bending over him.

There had not been sufficient time for Rex to prevent anything that had been done, but he was far from being disposed to let the men have their way. He knew that they would dare to stop only a short time, anyway—whatever he did must be done quickly.

He uttered a sharp cry and sprung forward.

The startled roughs paused in their work and looked up. One of them held the gold watch, but the chain had not been detached from the button-hole.

"Help! Police!" cried Rex, springing at the men.

He was as brave as a lion, and cared nothing for the fact that either of the men could undoubtedly master him in a fight.

The fellow who had the watch gave a jerk and the chain flew loose, but the delay had been unfortunate for him. Before he could gain an upright position Rex struck out with his clinched hand, and the robber went sprawling upon his back.

He sprung up as soon as possible, but, being really a very cowardly fellow, was struck with alarm as he saw that his ally was in retreat. He was dimly conscious that he had dropped the watch, but as Rex cried, "Police!" again he decided not to look for it.

Panic-stricken, he fled like the coward he was. Singularly enough, Rex was left alone with the prostrate man. Usually such an event would have attracted others to the scene, but not now.

Rex picked up the watch, and the young man endeavored to rise. His efforts bid fair to prove fruitless, but Rex gave his aid. Then he stood

swaying upon his feet, a dull, vacant expression upon his face. The blow received had sobered him a good deal, so far as the liquor was concerned, but as he slowly put one hand to his scalp, Rex suspected that it had badly injured his head.

"Are you hurt, sir?" the boy asked.

"Hurt?" mechanically repeated the man. "I don't know. What has happened?"

"You were knocked down by two roughs."

"I remember that something happened."

The speaker was looking dully, vacantly at nothing in particular. He suddenly staggered, and then, recovering his balance with Rex's help, added in a tremulous voice:

"Do you live near here?"

"Right in this house, sir."

"Take me to your rooms."

"To our rooms?" echoed Rex.

"Yes. I am badly hurt, and if I don't get among honest persons I'll never get out of this section alive. I am a drunken fool, and not fit now to take care of myself. I don't want a policeman to see me—they know me too well. And I won't trust them. I will pay you well. See! here is money!"

He produced a big roll of money, and Rex saw how dangerous it was for him to go wandering around. The boy had a precedent to go by—Mr. Toffling had once taken in a man who was in just such condition—and then Rex remembered Five Points Phil.

"Perhaps he is in trouble!" thought Rex, "and if he is, I should bitterly blame the person who would not help him. I'll take this man to Uncle Eph's rooms."

He did so, though it was no easy task to guide and help his companion up all the steep, narrow stairs. Mr. and Mrs. Toffling, honest and gentle as they were, had always lived among rough people, and had been through experience calculated to fit them for this new responsibility.

They bathed the man's head about where he had been struck, and then had him lie down. He was as docile as a child, and thanked them in a way which told of good breeding.

"I'll sleep awhile," he said to Rex, to whom he had evidently taken a strong fancy. "You take care of my money, and it will be all right."

Receiving a promise to this effect he closed his eyes, but opened them after a few seconds.

"There is less than half the thousand I drew from the bank in that package," he said, rather vaguely. "I bet five hundred dollars on Wrestling Rex, the Pride of the Sixth Ward."

And then he closed his eyes again and seemed to fall asleep.

His last statement had made Rex start, and he paused with the man's gold watch in his hands. He had read the name engraved upon the inside case—"Willie Landerson" but he little knew how strange was the chance which had brought Landerson to that house.

CHAPTER X.

PHIL'S DOUBLE DANGER.

THE way in which Pfeffer swooped down upon Five Points Phil and grasped him by the collar was very fierce and aggressive, and a person less cool than the young detective would have been very much startled.

Phil, however, was not one of the kind to be easily frightened.

"Say, s'posen you lef' go o' my garment," he coolly replied. "That thar coat looks all right outside, but I bought it o' Solomon Moses Silverdich, arnd you can't bet on't fur a cent. It's liable ter s'plode like a can o' dynamite, arnd blow us both up. Ef you want any physical support ter stiffen yer weak legs, s'pose ye ketch a holt o' thart lumber arnd ease up on my garment. Assooredly!"

And the irrepressible detective looked down at his coat, as though the greatest cause for worry that he had in the world was that a rent would be made there.

"You are a spy!" hissed Pfeffer.

Phil looked up innocently.

"A which?" he repeated.

"A spy!"

"Great ginger! you don't say so? What's that?"

"Oh! come off!" Pfeffer impatiently replied. "I caught you spying upon us, and you are in for it. No amount of lying can help you out. Pratt, do you know this kid?"

"No," replied the old carpenter, in a mild voice.

"Of course not. He's a spy."

"I don't think he intended any harm."

"You don't, eh? Then why was he spying upon us?"

"I suppose he come in here as a good many boys do. Anyway, he ain't done no harm."

"He ain't, eh? Well, there's two opinions as to that. He heard what we said—"

Pfeffer stopped short, as though afraid that he was now going to say too much. His own conduct was of great importance to Phil. The two men had said nothing whatever that need worry them if there was no guilty secret in the case. Pratt was not worried; Pfeffer was. The inference was plain.

The young detective saw that his captor had recovered his wits, and was not likely to commit further indiscretion, so he came to the point.

"I ain't an artom o' idee what all this pestiferous row is about," he observed, "but ef you'll remove yer hand from my garment I'll perdooce a letter I hev."

"A letter?"

"Assoreedly."

"For whom?"

"Fur one D. Haskins."

"I am he. Give it to me at once."

"Wait a trifle," Phil coolly replied. "I'm a youth thart alays means ter do his dooty, arnd I want ter be sure. Arter bein' yanked around by my garment as I hev b'en, I'm sorter timid. A marn may smile and be a villain still. Commodore," to Pratt, "is this here handsome marn D. Haskins, Esquire?"

"That's him," said Pratt, smiling.

"Then h'yar's yer letter, general. I's bound ter be sure, fur I was tol' ter be so. Fax is fax, arnd they're stubborn things."

Pfeffer received the letter and began reading it, while Phil stepped forward and began talking with the old carpenter. The latter he had set down as a plain, honest, and somewhat simple old man, who was just the opposite of Pfeffer—or Haskins, to give the latter his true name.

Pratt seemed as innocent of evil intentions as a child.

While Phil talked with him he kept secret watch upon Haskins, to see how he liked his letter. It did not please him, if the frown which soon gathered on his face was any criterion. Phil had not expected that it would. Mr. Short had asked the man to leave the city, which was not likely to please his ally.

Haskins finally crushed the letter in his hand, and then redirected his gaze to Phil.

"Are you a friend of Short's?" he asked, suspiciously.

"Assoreedly."

"Where do you live?"

"Wherever I kin tie up best."

"Why did you stop to listen to us, when you came in here?"

"I didn't," Phil boldly replied.

"Don't lie, boy!"

"Assoreedly not!"

"I say that you listened; that you are a spy."

Phil composedly hooked his thumbs into the arm-holes of his vest, cocked his head on one side and nodded to his accuser.

"Ef you know so much more erbout my affairs than I do, why don't ye tell the story?" he asked. "Why do ye arsk questions o' me?"

"Impudence will not save you."

"Why, now, Haskins," said Pratt, mildly, "I don't see the need o' so much talk. What's the boy done? Suppose he *did* listen?—I ain't said nothin' to be ashamed on."

"You don't understand," replied Haskins.

"I guess I don't."

"Thart critter *does*," declared Phil, indicating Haskins. "He's an encyclo-velocipede o' fax arnd fancies—mostly fancies. What he *don't* know wouldn't make more nor ten thousand volumes, by ginger! Pestiferous wise, *you* be, Whaskins, and right flippy, too."

"You shall go with me to Short."

"Assoreedly, Mashkins."

"If he says you are all right, I've no more to say."

"Course not, Flashkins."

"See here, don't you murder my name."

"I won't, Splashkins."

The man gave his young opponent a most malevolent glance, but dared not take revenge while Pratt was around. He mentally vowed that when he got him outside, however, their quarrel should be settled. Phil read what was passing in his mind, but showed no inclination to avoid going out. He had plans, as well as the man, and he felt amply able to take care of himself.

"Wal, so-long," he said, nodding to Pratt. "Ef I don't see ye ag'in, inquire fur me o' Blushkins."

And then they went out.

Haskins closed the front door of the house after them, and then turned a white, angry face toward the boy.

"I've a good mind to throttle you!" he hissed.

"Wharfore?" coolly asked Phil.

"Because of your impudence."

"Mister, b'ar one thing in yer mind, or right close to it. Our 'quaintance opened by your takin' me by the collar o' my garment, arnd the scruff o' my neck, arnd shakin', arnd slammin' me 'round ez though I was a tough piece o' steak thort must be pounded afore bein' cooked. Member it, my b'loved cornemporary? Now I admit I hev a *rayther* lively tongue when it's stirred up, but I never use it rough on folks who behave right. When you shook me ez though I was a rat, it sorter riled me, ye see."

"That's all very well," Haskins sullenly replied, "but I am not to be blinded."

"What d'ye mean by that?"

"I recognize an enemy in you."

"Great ginger! you don't say so! Why?" Haskins did not answer, but, after looking suspiciously at the boy for several moments, turned abruptly away.

"Come with me!" he directed. "We will go to Short."

They started off briskly, each with his mind busy. Phil had no intention of visiting Mr. Short. He believed that he had struck the trail in the case already, and that he had only to follow up Short and Haskins to learn why the latter had stolen certain articles from Mrs. Austin's trunk.

What Haskins and Pratt had said about some ancient, honorable family had impressed him deeply. He was now anxious to have a talk with Pratt, whom he recognized to be an honest man, and discover all that he could about this unknown family.

For the present, his chief desire was to get away from Haskins, and as they proceeded he watched for a chance.

Haskins, anticipating something of the kind, did his share of watching, and looked sharply to see that Phil did not escape.

If both had paid more attention to their surroundings, it would have been better for them.

They were in a part of the city where, at that hour of the night, the safest way was to "keep an eye out" for general danger, for a pedestrian was liable to come to grief if he went along heedlessly.

Phil and Haskins did not take such precautions, and they came to grief.

They were passing a dark alley when several men suddenly sprung out; violent hands were laid upon the passers; and in a moment more they were whirled into the alley in a way far from gentle. The darkness closed around them, as though to forever hide them from sight.

CHAPTER XI. ACTIVE PHIL.

PHIL was not at all disposed to submit to such usage. He struggled, and he tried to cry out, but one effort was as useless as the other. At the start one of the men had clapped his hand over the young detective's mouth, and strong arms now held him tight.

He fought hard to escape, but the attempt was a failure.

The alley was so dark that he could see nothing whatever, but he found himself carried back several yards and then borne through a doorway into what seemed a small, rear house. Still all was dark.

"Take the boy into the next room!" said an authoritative voice.

Phil tried to speak—to say that he would like a voice in this matter—but once more he tried in vain. His captor marched into the next room, still holding him fast.

"Strike a light!" he said, to some invisible person.

The direction was obeyed only after some fumbling and blundering about of the second man. Then light was obtained, and a kerosene lamp on the table partially dispelled the darkness.

Phil was suddenly released, but a revolver was as suddenly thrust close to his face.

"Be silent!" ordered the man who held it.

Phil looked at the revolver, and then at the man.

"I'm mum as the statoo o' a dumb marn!" he answered, very promptly.

"Sit down in that chair!"

"Assoreedly!"

Phil sat down obediently.

"Now keep your place there. You will not be hurt if you behave, but you must know that we mean business. Try to run away, or make a cry for help, and I will knock you over as quick as I would a mad dog."

"Thart's all right, my b'loved cornemporary, but I'd like ter arsk what all this uproar means. Why be I sot upon arnd captervated like con-

spirator ag'in' the legal gover'munt? Why be you so flippy with me?"

"It's not you."

"Not me? Then who be I?"

"I mean that you are only here because you were with that man. He was the one we wanted, but you were along, so we took you, too."

"Ruther, I should say. Fax is fax, arnd they're stubborn things. Wal, ef you don't want me, why not let me out ag'in?"

"To go to the police!"

"Not any. I ain't in love with yer other pris'ner, arnd I don't keer ter help his battles. Jest open the door arnd I'll scoot like a hotel waiter arter a tip."

"You'll stay here; and that will do for talk. Say no more."

"But, yer see I'm in a hurry—"

"I don't care if you are. *Be silent!*"

The man suddenly thrust his revolver forward, while a most forbidding scowl appeared upon his face. He was a coarse, brutal-looking fellow, and Phil decided that it would not do to trifle with him. He was wholly mystified by what had occurred. Why had the assault been made? If the only motive was plunder, why hadn't he and Haskins been searched in the yard?

It would be more in the fashion of the city rough to beat them senseless, rob and leave them in the dark alley.

Five Points Phil was shrewd enough to suspect that there was more in this case than a simple robbery.

He was rather glad that Haskins, not himself, was the person aimed at.

Half an hour passed. By that time Phil had become uneasy. He tried to talk with his guards. The effort was a failure; he was sternly ordered to be silent. Another half-hour passed.

Then the door opened and a third man entered the room. He looked sharply at Phil, and then beckoned one of the boy's captors aside. They talked in low tones for some time, occasionally glancing at Phil, and then the third man came forward and sat down near the prisoner.

"Boy," he said, abruptly, "who are you?"

"Name Tom Jones," was the terse reply, for Phil was getting annoyed by the delay.

"Where do you live?"

"Number 840 Mott street," returned Phil, without a blush, though well aware there was no such number.

"Do you live with Haskins?"

"Do I? Wal, I guess *not*!"

"You were with him to-night."

"Assoreedly."

"What do you know of him?"

"Nothin' good."

"What do you know that is bad?"

"Nothin'."

"Take care, boy! You had better not make me your enemy."

"I mean jest what I say; I know nothin' erbout the man. Ye see, another feller hired me ter take a letter ter him—ter Haskins—arnd I tu'k it, arnd I was doin' my level best when you fellers dropped ont'er me arnd smote me hip arnd thigh, arnd rolled me over in the mud arnd sot on me, arnd—"

"That will do. I don't believe you."

"My story costs some price, whether ye b'lieve it or not—three fur a quarter; five per cent. off ter the trade."

Phil spoke with all the outward cheerfulness imaginable.

"I see you're a deep one," growled his questioner.

"Can't be over five foot six deep, nohow, owin' ter the limited dimensions o' my stature."

"I am now convinced that you are Haskins's ally; your way of talking proves it."

"Great ginger! what kin I say, anyhow? Strikes me you're hard ter suit."

"I am easily suited and, knowing you to be his ally, I shall hold fast to you. You stay here as a prisoner until you see fit to talk."

"Oh! say, now, mister, don't be hard on an or'fin!" implored Phil, with mock solemnity.

"You don't look like sech a hard-hearted critter as all that. What've I done ter ruffle yer feathers? Can't you take my word arnd lemme go?"

"You will not go one inch until you have concluded to tell all that you know about Haskins—and have done so. Boys, throw him into the pen. If he gets tired, and wants to speak out, he can rap on the door; otherwise he will stay there until the end of the world."

"Which end?" Phil coolly asked.

There was no answer to this question, and the boy was hustled out of the room into the "pen." This proved to be another, but smaller,

room next to it; a place in the middle of the house, without door or window to connect it with the outer world.

As he was thrust in Phil saw it was well filled with household goods, seeming to be a sort of back-kitchen; and then the door closed and he was alone. It was not wholly dark; a single-sash window connected it with the next room, and he could see all that was necessary.

He sat down and made up a serio-comic face. "Up a stump ag'in, Five Points Phil!" he soliloquized. "You're a bad case fur gittin' inter pestiferous scrapes, by ginger! This comes o' keepin' bad comp'ny. Ef you hadn't b'en with Haskins ye wouldn't got yanked in hyar so roodly. Assooredly not!"

He paused and rubbed his chin thoughtfully. "Wot's inter this, anyhow? Haskins is nabbed, but what fur? Guess it's a case outside o' my circuit. I only hope they'll keep my b'loved corntemporary awhile, arnd give me a chance ter flourish 'round arnd investigate."

The fact that he could not investigate while he was a prisoner impressed Phil strongly at this point.

He arose and looked through the window into the next room.

Two men—his original captors—were seated at the table. They had produced a pack of cards, and, with pipes in their mouths, seemed perfectly happy.

The only way out of Phil's prison was into that room, and there they sat where they would see him at once. He sat down again, rather mournfully.

"They don't give me a fair show," he muttered. "They're wu'ss than red Injuns; when they hev a marn run the gantlet they leave a leetle gap so he kin start, anyhow, but these pestiferous varmint don't do any sech thing. Wouldn't they howl ef I should git away, as 'tis!"

He looked around his narrow prison to the best of his ability.

Few hopes of getting out of it, it seemed. "But I must," he added. "When I used ter live at the Five Points I was considered a marn o' backbone arnd grit. Mustn't backslide now—I'll git out, or t'ar the roof right orf the pestiferous ol' house!"

Impossible as this threat was, it gave him an idea. He could not reach the roof, but the floor was directly under his feet, and it was a rough, worn, uneven concern, which looked as though much weight would crush it in.

Was it possible to dig out? Such was the question in Phil's mind. He cautiously examined the floor. Everything went to encourage him, but he saw that he must have something with which to work. He searched and found a hatchet. It was the very thing, if he was allowed to use it.

All depended upon escaping discovery. The floor was a double, or had been—in some places the upper layer of boards had been entirely worn through. He inserted the edge of the hatchet in one of these worn places and gently pried. He had feared that some of the nails would hold and creak, but was happily disappointed.

The board rose up quite readily. Phil's eyes glittered; a little more of this and he must be on the road to somewhere—he did not know where.

Working cautiously he raised three of the old, worn boards. This was enough of them; the next thing was to attack the lower layer. He did not believe that these would be nailed, and his greatest fear now was that the door would be opened prematurely. If this was done, the upturn boards would surely be seen and his escape frustrated.

He resumed work zealously, but cautiously.

CHAPTER XII.

A CLOSE CALL.

WHAT secrets that old house held! Five Points Phil was working desperately for liberty, a blessing all the more to be desired because he believed that Haskins was the man who had stolen Mrs. Austin's property and he wished to hunt him down and learn why Mrs. Austin, apparently poor and humble, was such an important person.

There, too, was Haskins, a prisoner. What was the mystery with which he was connected? What events of the past had cast their shadows upon an honored family, bringing trouble and disgrace to them?

There, too, were the kidnappers. Why had they seized Haskins? What object were they trying to achieve?

Yes, the house was one of secrets, but it was no exception to the majority of houses of New

York. Every closet has its skeleton, every household, almost, has its painful secret, and all too many houses have their evil plots and crimes.

Five Points Phil raised one of the lower boards; it had not been nailed at all.

Thus far all was working well, and if they would only give him a little more time he would go—where? Through the opening left by the removal of the boards came the familiar odor of a cellar. His way was to this, but afterward—what then?

Could he go on, or would he be imprisoned in the cellar?

It was no time to be troubled by this; he raised another board. The aperture was then sufficiently large to enable him to descend. He looked down—all was intensely dark below. He dropped a small piece of board; it fell only a short distance, and struck with a plain though dull sound?

"I reckon thar ain't no danger in follerin'," he silently commented.

He took one more look at the men, saw that they were still playing cards, and then prepared for the venture. A light would then have been a great blessing, for he did not know what was below, but such a thing was not to be had.

"Got ter go it in the dark, by ginger," he muttered, "but I ain't ter be dashed. Wade in, Philip—remember you was raised at the Five Points and don't git scart. Scart! Great ginger! what would my old cronies say if I did? Ain't I ez plucky ez when I wore rags outside my cuticle? Wal, I should remark!"

Coolly he lowered himself through the hole in the floor until he hung by his arms, as far down as he could thus go. Then he dropped.

Only a short distance did he go. He alighted upon his feet with hardly a jar, and was fairly started on his new adventure. All was dark and silent in the cellar, but when he moved forward he collided with a barrel.

This taught him caution, and he went ahead slowly and systematically.

In a short time he found the cellar stairs, but as these would only take him back into some part of the house, he hesitated about using them. If he could only find another way of egress it would be greatly to his benefit.

He tried and failed; the cellar was small, commonplace and secure. He must either ascend the stairs or remain where he was.

He at once arrived at a decision. Going to the stairs, he crept up with all possible caution. Not a sound betrayed his movements. He reached the door and listened; all was quiet beyond. He tried the door; it was not locked. Slowly and carefully he opened it a little.

By chance, the first thing that he saw was a clock. The hands pointed to twelve o'clock.

The room beyond was the kitchen, but on this occasion, at least, it was something more; it was a sleeping apartment. Three men were lying upon blankets spread on the floor, apparently fast asleep.

Phil hesitated. In order to leave the house he must pass through that room; must run the gantlet, as it were, of these sleeping men. In doing it he might make some sound which would arouse them, and then the whole gang would be after him.

It was a risk to take, but the mere thought of avoiding it made Phil smile. He had taken a good many risks in his career as a street-boy, and was not to be alarmed now.

He marked the location of the outer door and entered the room.

Stepping with all possible care he moved across the floor.

The men slept on. He neared the door.

Success seemed almost within his grasp, when one of the men moved uneasily, and then turned over. As he did so his foot struck the empty coal-scuttle, and it went over with a rattle and a bang.

Those were men who did not sleep soundly; hunted men, who had reason at every moment to expect the grasp of the law upon their shoulders, as a reward for their crimes. When this sound arose it acted like a spur upon the men, and they sprang to their feet in alarm, their hands instinctively seeking their weapons.

Five Points Phil had made a dive for the door when he saw that secrecy was out of the question, but he collided with one of the men and found himself seized in a tenacious grasp.

"Hold up!" cried his captor.

"Police!" hissed another man.

"Down with 'em!—don't be taken alive!" snarled the third rough.

"Where be they?"

"Who have we here?"

"Why, it's the boy!"

All these questions and exclamations had been poured out rapidly, but it was clear that the men would soon learn that the alarm was a false one, and then all attention would be centered upon "the boy." Phil realized this, and acted accordingly.

Calling all his strength to his aid he made an effort to wrench himself from the man's grasp.

He succeeded; the hold was broken, and he darted toward the door.

"Stop him!" cried one of the roughs.

"I'll shoot the little fool!"

He who had lately held him drew a revolver, but a cooler-headed companion knocked it aside.

"No!" he exclaimed. "Would you have the police onto us?"

Phil wrenched open the door. The dark alley was beyond; a low, dirty, repulsive place usually, but very friendly of appearance just then. Phil took one more step, and then a heavy hand fell upon his shoulder.

"No, you don't!" cried a voice.

Phil slipped like an eel from that grasp, and fled through the alley. Once there he deemed escape certain, and he turned and sent back a defiant, mocking retort:

"Yes, I do, my b'loved corntemporary!"

Heavy footsteps sounded behind him, and he darted along. The alley was only a few yards long, and he was soon upon the street. Once there he felt safe, for, like most boys, he was master of the art of dodging and running. The street was nearly deserted, but he ran lightly along toward the Bowery.

Looking back he saw the roughs come out of the alley, but they did not pursue him further.

"Score one more fur me!" murmured Phil, as he moderated his speed. "Dunno why 'tis, but I sorter hev a knack o' squeezin' out o' pestiferous scrapes! Comes nat'ral ter me, I reckon, ez freckles does ter some kids. Now, I s'pose them toughs expeck me ter let loose the dorgs o' war onter 'em, but I won't. Why? 'Cause I hope they'll keep Haskins right thar. Assooredly! I want time ter investigate. I hev an idee that ef I see Pratt, the carpenter, arnd find out what old-time fam'ly he used ter labor fur, I may git onter the track of Mrs. Austin's mystery. Jes' so! Wade in, Philip!—but fu'st o' all, go home arnd sleep."

He took this good advice, and passed the remainder of the night in peaceful rest.

The next morning he arose, ready for action. Knowing that changes might have occurred in the Baxter street house where Mrs. Austin had died, he went there first of all, and great was the joy of Wrestling Rex to see his friend safely back.

"Why, I've worried terribly about you," he declared, winding up an explanation.

Phil looked at him in reproving surprise. "My b'loved corntemporary, never do so ag'in. B'ar in mind thart I am a pecoiliar marn. I've been in a heap o' pestiferous scrapes, but not one on 'em kin keep me down. Never worry erbout sech a s'perienced detective ez I be—no reason for it. Fax is fax, arnd they're stubborn things."

"I won't do so again," replied Rex, laughing.

"Any noos, my frien'?"

"We have a sick man here."

"Not Pfeffer?"

"No, indeed; his name seems to be Willis Landerson."

"Don't know him."

"Nor I. He was attacked by roughs last night, severely wounded and left near our door. I saved him from actual death, possibly. He was very drunk, so, at his own request, we helped him up to our rooms. This morning he isn't able to go out."

"All the work o' rum?"

"Yes; I think so."

"Strange what a heap o' harm that stuff does; it lowers a marn ter the rank o' a hog—it does, by ginger! Ef I's ter hev my choice, hug a swine or a drunken marn, I'd give the swine a most lovin' embrace."

"This man," pursued Rex, thoughtfully, "doesn't know who I am, yet he last night revealed the fact that he had a bet up on me, in my match with the West Street Wonder. I'm sorry it is so."

This information tended to make Phil interested in Willis Landerson, and he went in to see him. The wounded man, however, was not in condition to receive him properly; his mind was wandering, and he could not talk coherently.

Phil remained in the house an hour, and then started to see Pratt, the carpenter. The boy was eager to get further clew in his detective work.

CHAPTER XIII.
SOMETHING STARTLING.

WHEN Phil reached the carpenter's house he experienced a disappointment. Pratt was not at home, he and his wife had gone into the country for two or three days. There was only one thing to do; to wait until they returned.

The events of the following thirty-six hours may be briefly told. The burial of Mrs. Austin took place, an event less mournful than might have been expected when she died. Generous hearts furnished money to defray the necessary expense. Rex gave something from money earned by wrestling; the Tofflings put in the proceeds of more than one umbrella mended in their rooms; and other poor persons gave their mite; but by far the largest sum was brought by Phil.

Over a year before, when he was a ragged street-boy, he had had the good fortune to aid a gentleman named Solomon Richmore, and win his gratitude.

This gentleman had sent Phil to school, and was preparing him for a business career. When he heard of Mrs. Austin's case he promptly filled out a check, and it was this gift that came in so timely.

Little Ella remained with the Tofflings, and would do so permanently, unless her relatives could be found.

Willis Landerson rallied from his injuries and left the tenement-house.

Five Points Phil once passed the head of the alley where he and Haskins had been captured, but saw no one he knew. He did not investigate closely, hoping that Haskins was still held prisoner there, and would be kept as such for awhile.

The young detective had learned that Short, the man who had sent him to Haskins, *alias* Pfeffer, with a letter, was a real estate broker, among other things. This, however, did not help the boy, and he anxiously awaited the carpenter's return.

The evening following the day of Mrs. Austin's funeral was one of rain. It set in just before dark, and soon settled down for a rainy evening. Rain in the city is nearly always dreary, except when it comes to cool the air of a sultry day.

Rex, standing at the window and looking out at the drizzle which fell upon the rough street, and upon the wretched buildings around, thought that the evening was a fit successor of the day.

Then, as on a former occasion, he was looking for Five Points Phil, who had been invited to pass the evening in Toffling's rooms. Phil soon came, but the evening was not what they expected.

The first departure from the programme was when another visitor arrived. This was Matthew Solace, and he came uninvited.

No one was glad to see him. True, he was Wrestling Rex's "backer," but, as has been seen, neither Rex nor Umbrella Eph thought well of him. He might be a great man in the Sixth Ward, but he was no favorite with our friends.

They were obliged to treat him civilly, however, while he and Rex had business dealings, and he was received politely.

"A very cosy party you make," observed Mr. Solace, with his most genial smile.

"We are poor, but happy," replied Mrs. Toffling.

"There are many such persons in the Sixth Ward."

"They are poor, certainly."

"Why not happy?"

"Some of them are, but those who never get enough to eat and wear can hardly be happy."

"They don't stir around," declared Solace. "Now, the people of the Sixth Ward are my children, as it were. I love them, and they look up to me as a good genius. I hope they will one day send me to Congress."

This was Solace's ambition. He hoped to use his liquor saloon as a starting-place, and the voters of the Sixth Ward as a spring-board, and vault into the Washington Capitol at one bound.

"When you git thar," said Mr. Toffling, briskly, "I hope you will let me mend yer umbrella."

"I will, Eph."

"I'll do it wal."

"Maybe I have one that needs mending now. I'll bring it around," promised Solace, remembering Eph was a voter.

"Do so."

"I shall need it in the rain."

"This rain is glorious!" said Eph, with enthusiasm. "It will bring out the umbrellas;

folks will be keardless an' set 'em up with the tip down; the water will rot the cloth, an' thar will be work fur me."

He rubbed his hands, and then took up the morning paper.

"A very close guess they made this time," he added. "I owe Old Prob thanks. 'Threatening weather, followed by heavy local rains,' he says here. Well, it has rained, ain't it? Now, yesterday, he said—"

Mr. Toffling was looking for the paper, anxious to read further predictions, but Solace broke in.

"Rex, I came to see you."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. I've had a visit from Sam Upperly's backers."

"Anything new?"

"They want the match declared off."

Rex's face lighted up with pleasure.

"What's the reason of that, sir?"

"Scared, I believe."

Rex laughed lightly.

"Well, I am perfectly willing to have the match declared off."

"I am not!" Solace declared, sharply.

"No?"

"No, sir; it would ruin me. Every man, woman and child in the Sixth Ward knows me. They know me as a sporting man; as the patron of all amusements; as backer of this, that, or the other person; and they put great faith in me. When I walk the street I am pointed out and people say, 'There goes honest Mat Solace!' They call me lucky, too; what I take hold of turns out a success. To have a match declared off would be a severe blow to me. See?"

Rex did not see; the argument was not plain.

"Mr. Solace, I'd like to get out of that match," he said, earnestly.

"What! are you scared, too?"

"Not by a pestiferous sight!" indignantly interrupted Phil, who had been sitting very quiet, but Rex asked him with a gesture to be silent.

"If you think so, Mr. Solace, I will wrestle Sam Upperly, or any other boy of my age, in private."

"Bah!" growled Solace, with a good deal of meaning in the ejaculation. Then he added: "This 'private' wrestling, and the like, is all rubbish. I've got my money upon you to down Upperly regularly, and I want it done. Maintain your title of the Sixth Ward Pride."

"I'll do as I've agreed, but it's my last match."

"As you will."

"I'd rather lay pavements than to be in sporting life, so called."

Solace's round, red face flushed.

"That isn't very complimentary to me, but we will let it pass. I come to tell you that Upperly's backers were scared, and caution you not to listen to them if they approach you. The match must and shall come off in due form."

His manner was very belligerent and ugly for a great man, but Rex was less surprised than Mr. Toffling and his wife. He already understood Solace quite well.

"Just as you say, sir," he replied.

"And you will try to win?"

"Yes."

Rex spoke somewhat sharply. Solace was looking at him in a way which recalled Gerald St. Percy's attempt to bribe him to "throw" the match, and Rex wanted it distinctly understood that he should wrestle to win.

"Good!"

So saying Solace arose.

"I have business elsewhere, and must leave you," he explained. "Drop in when you can, Rex."

He went out, and for some time there was silence in the room. The Tofflings had never liked Matthew any too well, but their latest impression was the poorest of all. Still, they were not inclined to give an open opinion just then, and as Rex and Phil had nothing to say, there were no comments upon the great man.

Mrs. Toffling arose and left the room. Orphaned Ella had been put to bed, but it occurred to the good woman that the child might be awake and in sorrow.

Umbrella Eph picked up the last three newspapers and sat down to read the weather predictions, while the boys spoke in low tones.

Mrs. Toffling suddenly re-entered the room.

"Has Ella been here?" she asked.

Eph raised his head in surprise.

"Here!" he echoed. "Why, of course not. What do you mean? You look skart. Hev you—"

"Ella is gone; she isn't in bed!" the old lady anxiously replied.

Five Points Phil abruptly rose.

"Mrs. Toffling, mum," he said, earnestly, "I'd like you ter make inquiries right away arnd see ef she is in any other pusson's room. It stan's ter reason thart she ain't, arnd I've got an idee. Ef it's right, the sooner I light out the better."

"What do you mean?"

"Don't stop ter arsk, ef you please. Look in all the other rooms; inquire through the house; stir things up in gin'ral; arnd when you've done your work I'll do mine. Go, quick!"

Phil's manner was new to Mrs. Toffling, and it forced her to obey. She hurried from the room. The big rickety old house was a sort of beehive, so full was it of tenants, but out of the whole lot there were only three families who could possibly have taken Ella in. She was a shy child, and would not go among strangers.

Umbrella Eph went to her room. She had been in bed, but was now nowhere in the room. By the time he had finished his examination his wife returned.

"I can't find her!" she exclaimed.

"Course you can't!" Phil replied. "Didn't expeck you could. My b'loved corn'temporaries, Ella has been stolen!"

CHAPTER XIV.

A CLEW TO THE KIDNAPPERS.

PHIL'S assertion did not fall upon unbelieving ears. The same fear had been in the minds of all, though none of the others had been so positive as Phil.

"Stolen!" echoed Mrs. Toffling.

"Assooredly."

"But why should any one steal her?"

"Money inter it!" pronounced Phil, wisely nodding his head.

"Do you mean for ransom?"

"No, I don't." Strange you don't ketch on. Whose premises was lately burglariously entered?"

"You refer to how Mrs. Austin's trunk was robbed, I suppose."

"I do."

"And do you think this was done by the same parties?"

"Nothin' shorter."

The Tofflings gazed blankly at Phil. They had not the knowledge of the under-current of city life that he had, old as they were, and it was nature, rather than years, that took the lead.

"I'm afraid Phil is right," coincided Rex.

"Fax is fax, and they're stubborn things," Phil continued. "I want ter shout in yer ears in a whisper that Ella is more o' a gum-drop than you think on. Remember the time, care and patience Pfeffer tuk ter rob the trunk! Don't thart show thart the Austins was o' some importance? Now Ella is kidnapped. I tell ye, my b'loved corn'temporaries, we'll be s'prised when we git all the p'int in this case, arnd we'll hev 'em ef our suspender-buttons hold on—we will, by ginger! Arnd you'll find some big-bugs inter it, too; a marn may smile and be a villain still. Come, Rex!"

His friend was ready to follow, but Umbrella Eph caught his arm.

"Where be ye goin', boy?" he asked.

"Ter find Ella!"

"But whar'll ye look?"

"We'll look the hull pestiferous city through. I don't jestly know where, but ef we don't hit it first-off, we'll win in the end. Come on, Rex!"

This time there was no effort made to stop them, and they hastened down the stairs.

Phil knew what he was about. He argued that, as the kidnappers had not been gone long, some one might be around who had seen them go.

When they reached the street it was dismal enough. Rain was still falling, and the few passers-by hurried on with their umbrellas held far down over their eyes—if they were rich enough to own an umbrella—and seemed to think only of themselves.

Phil placed his reliance on the occupants of doorways. It would be odd if such persons were not to be found. Doorways are often the umbrellas of the poor.

Using his eyes quickly and successfully, Phil crossed the street, with Rex at his heels. Two very hard-looking young men stood in the shelter of a battered old door, chewing tobacco vigorously.

"Hallo, gents!" said Phil.

"Hallo, yerself!"

"Did ye jest see a man come out o' that house?"

"Naw," was the surly reply.

"Sure?"

"Dead sure."

"We'd be surer ef you'd give us enough ter run the growler, an', mebbe, we'd remember more," the second hard young man suggested.

Phil produced a twenty-five-cent piece.

"I'll give ye that ef you'll talk ter the p'int."

"Wal, we see Mat Solace come out."

"But before—jest afore?"

"Nobody except them dat went away in de cab."

"What! was there somebody went away in a cab?"

"Yes."

"Tell me all about it, will ye?"

"Wal, ye see de cab waited 'round de corner half an hour, fur I seen it dere. Finally a bloke came out of de house, went around de corner, an' den de cab drove to de door. Dey brought out a bundle an' put it in—"

"A bundle? What bundle? I mean, what was inter it?"

"How do I know? Dere was a gossamer over it, an' 'twas a big bundle—near as big as you are. Dey put it in de cab, got in demselves an' drove away. Dat's all."

The narrator of this story was a very "tough" young man, but Phil felt that he was to be depended upon. He had an air of truthfulness just then.

"Which way did they go?"

"Up dar."

The languid rough inclined one thumb to indicate

"Did ye know the cabman?"

"Naw."

"What lookin' critters were they with the cab?"

"Didn't get a good look at dem who went into de house, but de one who stayed in de cab was a sport. He was youngish, an' had a red mustache, turned up at de ends, an' a tall white hat which he wore over wan eye. I heerd dem call him Percy, or St. Percy, or something of dat sort."

"What!" cried Rex.

"Eh?"

"They called him *what*?"

"St. Percy, or something like it. I seen de same bloke wid Mat Solace dis afternoon."

Rex and Phil exchanged glances; they were surprised at last.

"Where'd ye see 'em?" Phil asked.

The tough young man mentioned a saloon of the better class a few blocks away.

"What was they doin' thar?"

"Talkin'."

"What erhout?"

"How do I know? Dey seemed very earnest about somethin', an' dat's all I know."

"My b'loved corntemporary, I'd give a good bit ter know the name o' that cabman, or the number o' the cab, or whar they driv ter."

"Wal, I don't know anythin' about it. I'd raise on me price ef I did, an' sell de secret, but I'm pumped dry."

Once more Phil believed fully in what the tough young man said, and he handed over the twenty-five cents, and he and Rex retreated to the door of the tenement-house.

"What do you make of it, Phil?" anxiously asked the Pride of the Sixth Ward.

"Mat Solace is inter it."

"I believe you. As for St. Percy, of course you remember the dishonest fellow who tried to lribe me to sell out to Sam Upperly. This man was he. Now, I'd like to know what Solace and St. Percy want of Ella."

Even astute Phil looked perplexed.

"Can't make it out," he admitted.

"It can't be a blow at me, Phil, for it don't affect me, you see."

"No."

The young detective paused, shut one eye and gazed steadily at the rain for a few moments. Then he added in a firm, stubborn manner:

"Rex, old boy, when I heerd that Ella was gone I said it was all along o' the fam'ly myst'ry. I say so now. Ef Solace is inter it—arnd it seems he is—why, then, he's up ter the myst'ry, too."

"This seems very strange," said Rex, in bewilderment.

"My frien', when you've b'en in the detective biz ez long ez I hev, you won't never be s'prised," answered Phil, as though he were a centenarian.

"This is a most pestiferous funny world, by ginger! But this ain't ter the p'int. The all-absorbin' question is, How be we goin' ter find Ella?"

"We don't know where she has been taken?"

"No."

"Nor have we any quick way of tracing the course of the cab?"

"Assoreedly not."

"Then I should say that our best way was to

move directly against St. Percy. Find him, and we may also find Ella."

"Now you talk right ter the p'int. D'ye know whar St. Percy lives?"

"On West Twelfth street, I think. He was to move there, anyway. But that isn't his principal resort."

Rex then mentioned a rather low hotel, which was well known to Phil as the resort of questionable characters.

"Hol' on a bit—thar may be somethin' in that. The place you speak on ain't over arnd above high up in the social scale, arnd it wouldn't s'prise me ef they could be hired ter take in a prisoner. See hyar, you jest slide over ter Mat Solace's saloon on the sly arnd see ef he is thar, arnd I'll go ter the hotel. Then you come on arnd meet me nigh the hotel—say one block below—arnd ef neither on us hez a clew, we'll take a squint at West Twelfth street."

Rex readily agreed to all this, and then they provided themselves with umbrellas and set out.

Phil went directly to the hotel, but did not enter until he had looked the place over. It was one of those small, rusty, old-fashioned buildings which, when used as a hotel, never fail to impress the beholder unfavorably, and he knew that it was no better than it looked. Its patrons were flashy young men who were either knaves or fools. In the last class may be included the young man about town who means to be respectable, but thinks that he cannot enjoy life without being a meteor in the world.

Failing to see anything unusual, Phil finally sauntered into the bar-room. He did not attract attention, for there were others of his age present. Luckily, too, there were enough in all so that he could hide himself among them, as it were.

St. Percy was not there.

He satisfied himself on that point, and then moved to the door of the reading-room. Still he was unsuccessful. Retreating a few steps he resolved to wait at least half an hour, but as he did so he suddenly paused at sight of a man who came down the stairs.

It was St. Percy, at last!

CHAPTER XV.

PROMPT WORK.

THE impression at once flashed upon Five Points Phil that St. Percy had just come from Ella. He had left Baxter street in the cab with her, and here he now was at the hotel, coming from the upper part. Just about time enough had been given him to convey her there, place her in some room and then descend to the bar-room.

Whatever Mr. St. Percy had done, he was now in a perfectly cool frame of mind. He joined the crowd at the bar, shook hands with two flashy fellows, and then asked them to drink.

The three leaned upon the bar and began to talk briskly.

Phil listened to these birds of prey for awhile, but, failing to get any points, decided to go out. Rex must by that time be at hand, and it would be well to confer with his ally.

"He went, and found Rex waiting at the corner."

The latter had been to Solace's saloon. The great man was there, but Rex had seen no sign to indicate anything out of the usual course of events. Phil told what he had discovered, and mentioned his vague impression that Ella was then in the hotel.

"How can we settle it?" Rex asked.

"Thar's only one way."

"What is that?"

"Bribery!"

"To bribe some one inside, eh?"

"Assoreedly. This hotel is a pestiferous tough place, arnd all the folks in it are tough. Now, of course they hev servants thar, arnd it strikes me that the female servants—"

Phil suddenly paused.

They were near a side-entrance to the hotel, and at that moment a young woman came out. Phil, accustomed to read people at a glance, saw that she was poorly dressed and had that certain air which indelibly marks the average servant.

"Believing that he saw one of the girls employed in the place, he hastened forward and accosted her just as she was moving away."

"Beg yer pardon, miss," he said, genially, "but kin I speak with yer?"

"No, you can't!" was the curt reply.

"Wait a bit; don't be too flippy. I mean no harm, arnd I'm ready ter pay fur what I want ter know, cash on the nail!"

Irresistible argument! He had often seen the

power of money illustrated; he saw it once more. The girl paused.

"What do ye want ter know?" she asked.

"What small girl was jest took up-stairs?"

Phil asked the question as confidently as though all had been settled, and he was rewarded by a start and a quick glance from the girl. Her reply was not so favorable, however.

"What're ye talkin' about?" she sharply asked.

"The small girl Gerald St. Percy took up thar—her name is Ella."

"Well, what about her?" the servant asked, after a pause.

"Where hev they put her?"

"Takes money ter find out," was the pert reply.

Phil slipped a coin into her hand.

"Will that do it?"

"Bet yer life! St. Percy has jest taken a small girl up there, an' her name is Ella. She's locked inter a room by herself."

"My good frien', what's St. Percy's game?"

"Don't know. All I do know is what I've told you. The girl is cryin'—I suspected from the first that 'twas a bad piece of work."

"Assoreedly! See hyar, Maggie—is that yer name?"

"No. It's Liz."

"Wal, Liz, I want ter rescue thart small girl, right off, quick."

"All right; do it."

"Will you help me?"

"No, I won't. S'pose I'd lose my place for sech a kid as *you* be? You ain't a man, an' you ain't pritty ter look at."

"Don't be too flippy, Liz; it ain't my fault ef you hev mernoperized all the good looks o' this crowd."

Phil answered with unfailing good-humor, and his compliment was not thrown away. The girl was pleased, and she revealed the fact in her expression.

"Give me a dollar, an' I'll go up an' bring the kid down," she suddenly said.

"Bring her first, arnd then you shall hev two dollars," Phil shrewdly amended, too wise to pay in advance.

"Done!" was the prompt reply, and Liz turned and re-entered the house.

Phil and Rex exchanged glances.

"Will she do it?" the latter asked.

"Now you puzzle me, my b'loved corntemporary. Either she means ter, or else she proposes ter bring the enemy out arnd betray us. Strikes me she is honest, but a marn may smile arnd be a villain still."

Their doubts were soon solved; barely five minutes had passed when Liz reappeared, and—Ella was with her. The child gave a cry of joy, and flew to meet Rex, while Phil gravely shook Liz's hand.

"You're a good 'un!" he affirmed; "you be, by ginger! Ef I's six or seven year older, arnd good lookin', I'd court you with matrimonial intent. Sure ez you's alive! Hyar's yer fee. But won't they find ye out?"

Liz gave her head a toss.

"I sha'n't go back. They give me notice a week ago, an' as they don't owe me anything, I won't go nigh them ag'in. I'm off—good-by!"

She gave her hand to Phil, and then hurried away down the street. Phil turned quickly to his companions.

"Come on!" he exclaimed. "We want ter slide away from hyar like lightnin' skatin' on a greased rainbow. Ef thart sportin' gent should diskiver us thar would be the wust kind of a pestiferous diffikilty."

"We can take a car here for home," observed Rex, holding to Ella's hand.

"We'll talk o' thart when a few blocks away."

The young detective had no more to say until they were at a safe distance. Then he abruptly added:

"My frien', take my advice, arnd don't take Ella back ter Baxter street. She's got inemies, arnd they're arter her hot. The best way is ter put her in another refuge fur awhile."

"I know of no place."

"I do."

"Where?"

"Solomon Richmore's. He's the gent, ef you remember, thart I once saved from pestiferous scamps, arnd the one who took me out o' the gutter, schooled me, arnd made me a marn o' leisure, so ter say. We'll take her ter him."

The idea pleased Rex, and though Ella was at first doubtful, Phil's persuasion soon satisfied her. She agreed, and they went to Richmore's.

It was a plain old house on Houston street, but Richmore was a man who did not care for show. Phil rung the bell, and as the master of

the house had not retired, they were soon in his presence. He was a man well advanced in years, and his face was a firm, resolute one, but he thought there was no other boy like Five Points Phil, so the latter was very cordially greeted.

"Hallo! what have we here?" he asked. "Have you brought an orphan asylum?"

We have heard Rex tell Phil in a previous chapter that, after the education he had received there was no good reason why the ex-Five Points boy should use such peculiar language. Solomon Richmore had paid for this schooling, and Phil took care to use good language in his presence.

"This girl, sir," he replied, "is an orphan, and she is in trouble."

"Indeed! I am sorry. Come here, my dear!"

His kind manner won Ella's confidence, and she went to him obediently. He set her upon his knee, and passed his hand over her brown hair.

"What is her trouble?" he asked.

"She has just lost her mother, Mr. Richmore, and now her enemies are persecuting her."

"For what reason?"

"That I don't know. It is a mystery."

"What! have you another detective case?"

"Yes, sir."

"You are a strange boy!"

"I hope you are not dissatisfied, sir."

"To find you helping an orphan child? Never, my dear boy—never! But tell me all about it."

"Hadn't we better give her in charge of Mrs. George, first?" asked Phil, with a significant look.

"A very good idea. It shall be done."

Mrs. George was the colored housekeeper. She was called; Ella was sent to a comfortable room with her; and then Phil told the whole story to his protector.

Mr. Richmore listened carefully. He was older and less imaginative than the boys, but though he was not so ready to assert that there was a fortune belonging to the girl, he could not but admit that there was a mystery in the case that ought to be known.

He volunteered to employ a detective to investigate Short and Haskins, but, at Phil's request, he promised to defer action until the lad had made one more effort himself.

He was, however, sympathetic and kind, and when the boys left the house they were in good spirits.

"In the mornin'," said Phil, "I'll go ter see Pratt, the carpenter. Then look out fur developments, my frien'!"

CHAPTER XVI.

THE STRANGER.

"I AM not in the habit of talkin' about fam'ly affairs, but I can't see as I'll do any harm by obligein' you. You're sure it can't be called gossipin', ain't you?"

"I should say not, Mr. Pratt."

"Then I'll tell ye—but you see I hev a horror o' gossip. 'Tain't dignified fur a man ter gossip; that's woman's business."

The speaker was Pratt, the carpenter. Five Points Phil had called upon him and, mentioning that he had taken an interest in the old, proud family of whom he had heard Pratt speak on a former occasion, had led the simple old man on to speak of them.

"I was a servant there, but I wa'n't in the least ashamed on it," began the carpenter, reveling in recollections. "Old Master Grim, as the more light-headed of the servants called him was an honest man if he was harsh, an' he trusted me. It wa'n't a lucky family. Everybody said so, an' there was stories o' tragedies 'way back. My master's only son was drowned. Well, when I went there, there was only the old gentleman, his wife an' their six year old girl, Estelle. She was born after her brother died, being a child of her parents' old age, but they loved her well. So did ev'rybody."

"My boy, it was my fortune ter see that girl grow up, an' I must say she was the sweetest child I ever seen. We all loved her—even her stern old father adored the ground she walked upon, an' he showed good sense, too, by doin' it. "The bad luck o' the fam'ly followed the girl, though, an' wher she grewed up she fell in love with the wrong man. She was heir to a heap o' money; her lover was poor. You can guess that her father didn't approve o' that."

"Approve on it? Well, I should say not. Miss Estelle's mother was dead, so he had full sway. He ordered her to drop the young man at once an' forever. I really believe Miss Estelle tried to, but she loved him too well. She couldn't drop him, an' she didn't. I say she was

right, for a finer young man than Edgar Trescott I never saw."

"But there was some awful rows. When the old gentleman saw that his orders was not obeyed he flew wild. He stormed like a pirate, an' abused Miss Estelle awful. What was the result? She run away with Trescott, an' they've never been seen nor heard from sence."

The old carpenter paused and sighed deeply.

Unknown to him or Phil, there was an unseen listener to this story. A stranger had entered the shop and stood listening, concealed by the boxes which had concealed Phil when he listened to Pratt and Haskins on a former occasion.

"What did the old gentleman do when they left him in the lurch?" asked Phil.

"That's where the dark part comes in. He died!"

"Died?"

"Yes."

"How do you mean?"

"He was found dead the mornin' after Miss Estelle eloped. There ain't no doubt in my mind that he died in a fit, but there was marks on his throat of human hands; an' somehow, the report got started—an awful rumor—that he had been strangled by his daughter an' her husband."

"The doctor said he had undoubtedly made the marks on his throat with his own hands, tearin' at it fur want o' breath, but the rumor had got in the papers, an' I take it, 'twas that which made Miss Estelle stay away—or she may hev felt sure o' her father's unforgivin' ways, an' never heard he was dead."

"Anyhow, she never come back. She was next o' kin, an' they looked fur her, but never come. It was very odd. Nobody thought her guilty, and she would hev been a great heiress, but she never come. Whether she's alive I don't know."

The old family servant sighed deeply as he ended.

"Somebody got the property," said Phil, quietly. "Who was it?"

"Her father's cousin, Thomas Landerson."

"Landerson?"

"Yes."

Phil winked twice in rapid succession. He had never heard the name but once before.

"I s'pose he's enjoyin' it now?"

"No, he's dead, an' his son has the property. A wild, dissipated fellow is Willis Landerson."

Phil's eyes brightened. He had not forgotten the dissolute young man whom Wrestling Rex had saved from the roughs of Baxter street.

"Did you mention a man named Short?" slowly inquired the boy, who knew that Pratt had not mentioned that person.

"Short is business agent of the Landerson estate. His father an' gran'father had the place afore him. The present Short I don't like. He and Miss Estelle had a quarrel. I think he wanted to marry her—an' I guess he'd lost his hold on the Landerson estate if Miss Estelle or her father had stayed there; but he an' Thomas were frien's, an' when the latter got to the front Short was again safe in his position."

"So Willis Landerson has the hull boodle now?"

"Yes."

"But he ain't the right owner, is he?"

"Not ef Miss Estelle is alive."

"Or her heirs."

"Ef she is dead, but left children, they own what Willis Landerson now holds. I declare, I don't know what will become of the property. Willis is drinkin' himself inter his grave, an' he's the last of the Landersons. When he dies it'll puzzle the lawyers ter tell who is next o' kin."

"Why don't they find Estelle?" Phil some what sharply inquired.

"I s'pose they can't."

"Nonsense!"

"I tell you, my lad," said the carpenter, shaking his head, "this is a big world, an' it's not easy ter find a lost person."

"I'll bet I could find Estelle!" declared Phil. The stranger who was listening behind the boxes started perceptibly, but Pratt only smiled.

"I wish you could."

"She's the real heir, you say?"

"If alive, she is."

"Ef not, her children be?"

"Yes."

"You say thart Willis arnd Short are chum-mies?"

"Yes."

"Arnd it's ter Short's int'rest ter hev Willis hang onter the property?"

"Of course."

"Assoreedly!"

Phil muttered the last word absently, and fell

into thought while the carpenter drew his plane along a board. Suddenly the boy arose.

"Wal, I'm off, Mr. Pratt!"

"So quick? Well, come ag'in, lad; come ag'in."

Phil promised and left the shop, whereupon the man who had been hidden behind the boxes suddenly came forth into Pratt's view.

"What! is it you, Mr. Drayton?" cried the carpenter.

"Pratt, who was that boy?" abruptly demanded the stranger.

"I believe his name is Phil. He chanced in one day, an' to-day he come ag'in."

"Why was he so cnrious about the Landersons?"

"I don't know; curiosity, I suppose, and—"

The carpenter said no more. Without waiting for him to finish the sentence, Mr. Drayton had hurried out out of the room in a way which left Pratt staring with wide-open eyes.

"Good land!" exclaimed the old man, "has he gone crazy?"

Mr. Drayton had not "gone crazy," but he had hastened down to the street and started in pursuit of Phil. He did not try to overtake the boy; he kept well back, and did his best to avoid discovery, but he followed persistently where the ex-Five Points youth went.

In this way he dogged him to the Baxter street tenement-house, unseen and secretive.

When Phil arrived there he found Rex out, but Umbrella Eph and his wife at once assured the young detective that they were glad it was so.

"We want to speak ter you on an important subject," said Toffing. "It's about Rex, an' it's serious. We only mention it ter you secretly, an' you must promise ter say nothin' ter him. We are awfully stirred up about Rex."

CHAPTER XVII.

WRESTLING REX'S LAST MATCH.

THE following day a coarse-faced, illy-dressed, brutal fellow was leaning against the side of an alley. He had an ill-smelling cigar in his mouth, the end being elevated in the air at an angle, and his whole appearance was that of a very "hard citizen."

The alley was the same that Five Points Phil and Haskins had been hustled into when they were captured, and this man was one of the kidnappers.

He had a purpose in being in the alley just then, and that purpose was to see that no policeman, or other dangerous character, entered.

One man only passed while he stood there. This was a ragged, down-at-the-heel-looking person, and the picket took no notice of him. He did not look dangerous. Three minutes later, however, another party appeared at the entrance to the alley and came tramping forward. The picket was startled at the first, and when he recognized Five Points Phil among them he quickly wheeled and started back.

As he did so the supposed-to-be harmless old fellow in rags suddenly barred his way, and when the rough would have flung him aside—or tried to do so—he coolly produced a revolver and thrust it forward.

"Stand!" he ordered, decisively. "I am a policeman—be careful how you act."

The rough turned pale with fear.

"Sail low, my man!" said he in rags. "I don't know that you are wanted, but we will see. Is Haskins in there?"

"Who?"

"Haskins."

"Don't know 'im."

"Don't lie, man. You see this boy, here; you got him at the same time you did Haskins. The boy knows you, so don't get yourself into trouble by lying. Where is Haskins?"

The rough gave Phil a sour glance.

"Speak quick, or your chance is gone."

"He's in thar!"

The rough spoke in a surly voice, and pointed toward the house at the rear.

"Why have you got him prisoner?"

The rough hesitated, and then, suddenly impressed with the idea that his best way was to speak out, did so with rapid utterance.

"He was inter a job with another feller, an' stole his share o' the plunder. We believed in share alike, an' honesty, an' as Haskins was crooked, we decided to tie him up until he told where the boodle was."

"Clear as mud. Well, we'll relieve you of Haskins. Come on, men!"

They went. They surrounded the little, old house, and for awhile there was good prospect of a lively time. The law-breakers inside were nearly as ready to fight as disturbed hornets,

but when informed that none of them were "wanted," they grew calmer and consented to listen to reason. Haskins was the man desired, and as he had sullenly held his peace while a prisoner, never giving them the least clew, they concluded to hand him over to the police rather than go themselves.

Haskins was produced.

He looked somewhat relieved at first, but his face fell as his gaze rested upon one of the official party. This man was Drayton.

The latter nodded to him coolly.

"We meet again, sir," he said, curtly.

Haskins did not answer.

"I hear that you are still doing Short's most disgraceful work," Drayton continued.

"It's a lie! I ain't seen him for six months," Haskins declared.

"Softly! Do you see this boy?"

Drayton pointed to Five Points Phil, and the prisoner's color changed perceptibly. He seemed too much alarmed to reply.

"You see that you are in the toils, Haskins. A fit end for Short's clerk. Well, are you going to confess, and get an atom of mercy? Where are the documents you stole from Mrs. Austin's trunk?"

"I stole?" echoed Haskins, trying to appear innocent. "I never touched—"

"Softly, my man. Your career as 'Pfeffer' is well known, and you may as well confess. Are the stolen papers in Short's possession? Come, Short's day is done, and you may as well desert the sinking ship. Will you speak out?"

A shout went up from several enthusiastic persons, and those who were pleased put their sentiments in words:

"Hurrah for the Pride of the Sixth Ward!"

Wrestling Rex and Sam Upperly, the West Street Wonder, had at last met, and Rex was making good the expectations of those who had bet that he would win the match.

Among the spectators were several persons well known to us. There were Matthew Solace, outwardly as bland and plausible as ever; Gerald St. Percy, with his money up on Sam Upperly, pale and anxious; Willis Landerson, half-intoxicated, noisy, and ready to bet even more on the Pride of the Sixth Ward; and Five Points Phil, cool, watchful and alert.

It looked as though Rex would win the first fall, and St. Percy turned his pale face toward Solace.

"In the devil's name, Mat, do something. The young hound will win, sure."

"I can't drug him; he won't drink!" irritably answered Solace, even as he clapped his hands in simulated joy at Rex's good work.

"Try him again!" groaned St. Percy.

"I will."

Solace hurried away, while Willis Landerson moved up to St. Percy's side.

"Ha!" he said, exultantly, "how's the Pride of the Sixth Ward now? Want to put up more money on Sam Upperly? If so, say the word."

St. Percy, however, turned away with a muttered curse; he was furious.

The wrestlers continued their work amidst applause. Solace approached with a well filled glass of some liquid—as a sporting man he was noted for making compounds to take the place of liquors.

"This will give Rex new prowess," he remarked.

A hand fell upon his arm, and he looked around and saw Five Points Phil by his side.

"Thank you," the young detective coolly remarked, "but me arnd Rex ain't drinkin' ter-day!"

"What have you got to do about it?" angrily cried Solace.

"I speak fur Rex. Put the pestiferous drink away!"

"Stand aside, boy, or I'll—"

"Softly, my b'loved cornemporary. I'm up ter your dodge. I don't mind sayin' that I was in yer saloon last night, arnd heerd you arnd St. Percy tell how Rex was ter be made ter lose this match. Stand off, mister; Wrestlin' Rex ain't goin' ter drink no drugged mixture while I'm around!" and Five Points Phil assumed a menacing attitude which meant business.

At that moment the room rung with the cheers of Rex's supporters; he had won the first fall.

Solace looked sharply at Phil, hesitated, stood irresolute during the lull, and only stirred to action when the second set-to was about to begin.

He then advanced a step toward Rex, but the boy waved him back sharply.

Matthew Solace's florid face grew pale, and the hand which held the glass sunk to his side. Be-

fore he had time to say more, however, his last chance to drug Rex was gone. Like one in a painful dream he saw the wrestlers face each other again, and with a muttered curse he turned the mixture upon the floor. He felt sure that Rex would win the second fall—which would give him the match—and the great man of the Sixth Ward had put his money on Sam Upperly.

Rex was wrestling without anything to mar his work, thanks to the fact that Phil had discovered the plot.

The style of wrestling was collar-and-elbow.

The young gladiators met for the second time. The spectators moved restlessly, and a subdued murmur of voices arose. No one was more silent than Gerald St. Percy. If Rex won he was five hundred dollars out, and all on a mad wager.

Landerson was not subdued. Liquor was working in his brain, and as the wrestlers staggered to and fro in their determined grapple, he cheered like a madman. He could see that Rex was the better of the two, and his exultation knew no bounds.

"Hurrah for the Sixth Ward Pride!" he shouted again and again.

Rex's most ardent supporter did not cheer. This was Five Points Phil. He was all absorbed in the contest, and watched with eager attention, but he had other things to think of.

Solace had failed to drug Rex, but there was no knowing what other trick might be played. Phil eyed Solace and St. Percy with watchful attention that never flagged.

Rex's work was remarkably fine, and those who did not know of his resolution to retire from the life, freely prophesied that he would one day have a reputation fully equal to that then enjoyed by Evan Lewis, Joe Acton and "the Jap."

Suddenly a loud shout arose. Sam had been fairly thrown for the second time, and Wrestling Rex had won the match.

Confusion at once reigned, and the spectators moved about as they pleased, but above all other sounds arose the united cheer:

"Hurrah for the Pride of the Sixth Ward!"

Landerson touched St. Percy upon the shoulder.

"I'm going to take in the stake now, friend," he said, laughing. "Didn't I tell you Rex Peters would win easily?"

Once more, however, St. Percy turned away with indistinct but bitter muttering. His five hundred dollars were lost, and it was a severe blow.

Five Points Phil accosted Rex as he was moving toward the dressing-room.

"Get on yer plain clothes ez quick ez you can!" the young detective urged. "Thar's work fur us ter do."

"Do you think St. Percy will try his game?" Rex asked, with some anxiety.

"Thar ain't a doubt on't. He's downcast now, but he'll brace up arter a little, arnd then Willis Landerson will be in pestiferous danger. Hurry up!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

A FAMILY AFFAIR.

"REX PETERS will make one of the greatest wrestlers ever seen!"

Willis Landerson made the assertion in a thick voice, looking across the table at St. Percy. The eyes of the former were bloodshot and nearly closed, and it was clear that he was nearing the last stage of intoxication. He had secured the money won on Rex's victory, and St. Percy, apparently fully recovered from his discomfiture, had called to congratulate him in a breezy way—at least so it appeared.

"No doubt," the gambler replied.

"He'll show 'em all—hic—by and by!" Willis asserted.

"I am fully converted to your views, Mr. Landerson. Suppose we drink to Rex's future glory once more."

"We will."

Landerson grasped the bottle which stood between them, and was about to pour out a quantity of the liquor, but as he held it at an angle the door suddenly opened and Five Points Phil marched into the room.

"Hold on thar!" cried the boy. "Don't ye touch any more o' that stuff. Can't ye see that shark is tryin' ter git ye drunk? Fax is fax, arnd they're stubborn things, by ginger! He wants ter steal back the wager money!"

Landerson looked stupidly at the new-comer, but St. Percy started angrily to his feet.

"You young scoundrel!" he cried, "how dare you interrupt us thus?"

"Didn't do it 'thus,' mister," retorted the ir-

repressible Phil. "I did it 'cause I wanted ter, arnd in me ye see the stern front o' outraged jestic. Assooedly! Look out, Gerald, fur thar's trouble out, arnd you're the man in danger. Come in, folkses, arnd le's hev a joobilee, so ter say."

Steps had sounded in the hall, and now several other persons entered. Three were men who, somehow, looked very much like officers of law, while the others were Solomon Richmore, Mr. Drayton, Pratt, the carpenter, Eph Toffling and Wrestling Rex.

St. Percy started to his feet, and an alarmed look appeared upon his face. He knew one of the first men to be an officer, and knew, too, what his own record was.

The officer nodded to him.

"Hallo, Pat Glynn!" he saluted, coolly.

The gambler could find no words of answer.

"You're wanted, Pat—or, perhaps, I ought to call you Mr. St. Percy. I believe you're a gentleman now. The law wants you, all the same, for abducting a small girl named Ella."

"I never heard of any such person!" St. Percy declared, recovering his wits.

"Of course you never did, Pat. We don't want you to confess, for we have the thing down fine. You knew that Ella Austin's real name was Ella Trescott, and that she was granddaughter of old Mortimer Landerson. You believed, too, that she ought to have the property which Willis Landerson—he's gone to sleep, I see; whisky has done it—which he has been squandering. You started a neat game, didn't you, Pat? Well, it's all over now, and you are to go through the mill for kidnapping the child, whom you hoped to use to force money from Willis Landerson."

St. Percy was trembling. He tried to answer with righteous indignation.

"But I swear that I am innocent—"

"Oh! certainly, certainly, Pat! I won't trouble you to explain. You're not the only one who is in a fix. Ambrose Short, business agent for the Landersons, is at Police Headquarters. He is worse than you. He was always the enemy of Estelle Landerson Trescott, after she declined to marry him, and when she eloped with Trescott he played the rascal ever after. It's a big tumble Short has taken."

"Estelle Trescott is dead, rest her soul! but her daughter lives—Ella Austin, they call her. It seems strange that she who was so lately living in the slums of the Sixth Ward should step into property, but so it is. It's no thanks to Short that the child is to have her own. He learned that Mr. Drayton, the lawyer—this gentleman by my side—actually had a faint clew to the whereabouts of the long-lost Estelle, and he tried to ruin all."

"He sent a tool of his named Haskins, alias Pfeffer, to work against her, but the poor woman died suddenly, of heart disease. Pfeffer robbed her trunk and secured valuable papers for Short, and the child, Ella, was left without a clew to her ancestors, her father, too, being dead. I doubt if the truth would ever have been known had it not been for this boy."

He pointed to Five Points Phil, who smiled and quietly replied:

"Never mind me, my b'loved cornemporary."

"I shall 'mind' you—"

"And so shall I," interrupted Mr. Drayton. "The lad's quick wit has done wonders for the Landersons, and as the family lawyer I shall insist upon rewarding him."

"All right, gin'ral; send around a dray-load o' Government bonds arnd I'll try ter take 'em in. Fax is fax, arnd they're stubborn things."

Drayton smiled, and then his face grew grave and he pointed to Willis Landerson.

"See that wretched young man sleeping there like the sot he is! Thank heaven! he is not the rightful owner of the Landerson money, and he will have it no more to squander. St. Percy, when you chanced upon the secret of Ella Austin's ancestry, you did not learn all. She is not heiress to the Landerson property. Behold the true heir!"

At the last words he pushed Wrestling Rex gently forward.

"This young man," he added, with great satisfaction expressed in his voice, "is, really, Ralph Trescott, grandson of old Mortimer Landerson, and brother of the so-called Ella Austin!"

It was a surprise to no one except St. Percy, and he was too much stunned to answer.

"That man Short was a most atrocious villain," pursued Mr. Drayton. "He never forgave Estelle for refusing him and marrying Trescott, and when their first child was born he had it stolen. Fortunately for the child, the

woman to whom he was confided was not all bad. She learned to love him, called him her own child, but died without telling the secret. The child grew up as Rex Peters.

"It was a strange chance which brought his mother to the same house—she had changed her name, and called herself Mrs. Austin, because anonymous, lying letters from Short made her believe she was thought her father's murderess—but she died without suspecting that Rex was her son.

"It was the Toffings who first suspected that Rex and Ella were related. Among the few things left to Ella by her mother was a photograph of her grandfather. When Rex's supposed mother died she had left a picture exactly like it—stolen by chance, when Rex was stolen from his mother—and this started the inquiry which has revealed all.

"Rex Peters is, really, Ralph Trescott, brother of Ella, grandson of Mortimer Landerson, and true possessor of all the wealth that man has so long held. He, however, never suspected that he was wronging any one. Poor, dissipated wretch that he is, let me do him justice."

He pointed to Willis Landerson as he spoke.

Five Points Phil gravely shook Rex's hand.

"My b'loved corntemporary," he said, in his usual whimsical manner, "lemme congratulate ye. It does me good ter know thart my larst detective case has made you a rich marn. It does, by ginger!"

"Phil," replied Rex, very earnestly, "I couldn't have been helped by a better person, and what I hope now is that we shall be friends forever."

"Don't see why we shouldn't, my frien'. Mr. Drayton will be your guardeen now, arnd ez he arnd Mr. Richmore are sech old frien's, why shouldn't we be frien's, too?"

"A capital idea," agreed Drayton, while Richmore nodded his approval.

"So be it," added Phil. "This is my larst detective case—no more street Arab business fur me. School begins right away, arnd I'll tend right to it fur Mr. Richmore's sake. Ef I ever git ter be a lawyer, ez he sez I shall, I kin partly cater ter my taste fur detective work. Whatever comes ter me I shall never forgit the days when I's one o' the shinin' lights o' Paradise Park, a forlorn young chap in rags, arnd only Five Points Phil!"

So little time had elapsed since the scenes of this story that only a little more can be said of the actors therein, but Short, St. Percy and Haskins are in State's Prison, and Solace, who could not be netted by the law, has lost nearly all his money by an unlucky speculation. He is still a power in the Sixth Ward, however.

Willis Landerson is in an asylum for inebriates. If he can be reformed, he will be provided for fairly.

Rex and Ella Trescott have their property at last, and as Lawyer Drayton is a wise guardian, their future looks bright. Carpenter Pratt and the Toffings have been provided for. Uncle Eph no longer needs to mend umbrellas, but he still reads the weather predictions faithfully.

Five Points Phil has gone to Solomon Richmore's own house, to remain permanently, and in his efforts to become an educated, useful man, he has little time to think of the days when he was a street boy and an amateur detective.

THE END.

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